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A

SKETCH of the LIFE and WRITINGS

OF THE

Rev. MICAIAH TOWGOOD,

BY

JAMES MANNING.

[PRICE THREE SHILLINGS.]



ERRATA.

Page 8. line 22.—For *rigorous*, read *rigorous*.

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| 27. | 1.—For <i>his</i> , read <i>this</i> . |
| 28. | 17.—For <i>annul</i> , read <i>annul</i> . |
| 80. | 10.—For <i>has</i> , read <i>hast</i> . |
| 80. | 14.—For <i>be</i> , read <i>the</i> . |
| 92. | 20.—For <i>his</i> , read <i>this</i> . |
| 113. | 23.—For <i>Satyr</i> , read <i>Satire</i> . |

A
S K E T C H
OF THE
LIFE AND WRITINGS
OF THE
REV. MICAIAH TOWGOOD,

BY
JAMES MANNING. *R*

“ His preaching much, but more his Practice wrought
“ (A living Sermon of the Truths he taught)”

DRYDEN.

EXETER:
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M,D,CCXCII.



A

SKETCH of the LIFE

OF THE

Rev. MICAIJAH TOWGOOD.

IF knowledge untainted by pedantry ; if ardour in the search of truth, united with tenderness for those in error ; if a happy mixture of gravity with cheerfulness, and dignity with condescension ; if acquaintance with the world, felicity of temper, and courtesy of deportment ; if piety without superstition, devotion without hypocrisy, and faith which worketh by love ; if distinguished application to the duties of his profession, accompanied by ability, faithfulness and success in the discharge of them, afford sufficient outlines to give force and character to the portrait of a truly useful and enlightened Minister, it seems highly probable the reader will not be displeased with an attempt, however hasty and inadequate, to delineate the Life and Character of the Rev. MICAIJAH TOWGOOD.

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The regular and uniform tenour of such a life offers, it must be confessed, very little variety for the entertainment of those readers, who are more amused by a succession of glaring incidents which gratify curiosity, than affected by an history which tends to enlarge their fund of useful knowledge, and excites them to virtuous conduct. But he whose wishes lead him to excel in intellectual and moral accomplishments, cannot, without pleasure, trace the gradual steps by which others have acquired reputation and esteem; and few have deservedly obtained so great a share of either, as the subject of the following Memoir.

To readers of the latter description, the history of such a man as Mr. TOWGOOD will be highly serviceable. It will direct and animate them in their christian course, and assist them in their progress to immortal glory. Indolence sometimes tempts us to conceive that the scheme of christian duty, prescribed by the Gospel, is ideal. We acknowledge the excellence of the precept, but speak peace to ourselves under our omissions and defects by asking, "who is sufficient for these things?"—

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Let us not be deceived. The lives of great and good men loudly declare, that every christian is enabled by the grace of God, to attain an equal degree of virtuous improvement; their example invites us to walk by the same rule, and to mind the same things, for thus have they walked, and to this height have they attained.

Peculiarly useful must such a history appear to those who have chosen the Ministry for the business of their lives. They will see the station they fill adorned with every thing necessary to render it reputable and useful; one of the soundest minds, joined with the most benevolent heart, and a life uniformly regulated by the worthiest principles.

The following attempt to delineate a character so truly excellent will, it is hoped, be received with candour by all to whose perusal it may be submitted.

Dr

Mr.

Mr. MICAJAH TOWGOOD was born at Axminster, in Devonshire, on the 17th of December 1700. His grandfather was the Rev. MATTHEW TOWGOOD, who, in the year 1662, feeling himself unable to comply with the Act of Uniformity, quitted the Establishment, with many other wise and virtuous men, who consulted conscience rather than worldly interest. By this "perversefens of integrity," as Dr. Johnson expresses it, he sacrificed some considerable worldly advantages, but these he esteemed more than compensated by the peace of his own mind, and the respect and affection of those who attended his ministry.*

Mr. MATTHEW TOWGOOD had two sons, both of whom were men of considerable learning,
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* Mr. MICAJAH TOWGOOD sent to the Editor of the new Edition of the Nonconformist's Memorial a brief account of his grandfather, and concluded his Memoir with these words; "I esteem it a greater honour to descend from one of these noble Confessors, than to have had a Coronet or Garter in the line of my ancestry; I look forward with joy to the approaching happy day, when that glorious list of heroes will shine with distinguished honours, and mount up to thrones of power, while their titled and enribboned Persecutors will sink into shame, and be glad to hide their faces in the deepest obscurity."

unaffected piety and extensive virtue; the one a Minister, father of the late Rev. STEPHEN TOWGOOD; the other a Physician,* who left two sons. Mr. JOHN DAVY TOWGOOD, the eldest, was educated at Edinburgh in the profession of his father, and settled at Tiverton, where he died about the year 1736. Mr. MICAJAH TOWGOOD, the subject of this Memoir, after a domestic education, which, from the character of his father, may reasonably be supposed to have given him early impressions of piety, and a strong desire of knowledge, was committed to the care of the Rev. Mr. CHADWICK, who had the satisfaction of educating many Ministers and Gentlemen of reputation in the West of England.

At Lady-day 1717, he left this school with Mr. AMORY, who was afterwards a writer of considerable eminence among the Dissenters. He was then placed, together with this Gentleman, under the academical instruction of the Rev. STEPHEN JAMES,

* Dr. MICAJAH TOWGOOD, the Physician, was the author of several publications on practical Divinity, and particularly "An Essay for Reformation of Manners".

JAMES, and the Rev. HENRY GROVE, who, in the reign of Queen Anne, were joint tutors of an academy at Taunton.

Having gone through the usual preparatory studies, he was invited in 1722, to become the Minister of a Congregation of Protestant Dissenters at Moreton-hampstead, in the County of Devon.

In this early period of life his habit appeared consumptive, which made his friends apprehensive that his life would be short; but by daily exercise in riding, the strictest temperance and a salubrious air, his constitution became more firm and vigorous. In his studies, preparatory to the Ministry, he had acquired a considerable stock of learning and knowledge, yet he did not consider this fund sufficient for future use, but, notwithstanding the delicacy of his constitution, pursued his studies with great diligence and application.

He rose at an early hour throughout the year, and had often spent a busy day before others began to enjoy it. In this practice he continued through life,

life, and thereby secured to himself a portion of leisure for study and composition, which the charge of a large congregation, without such economy of time, will seldom allow.

He very happily laid the foundation of an upright and faithful Ministry at the first entrance upon the public services of his life. About this time a strong and warm debate prevailed amongst the Dissenters, concerning the doctrine of the Trinity, and subscriptions to tests of orthodoxy, which many of the contenders on one side of the question would gladly have imposed on their opponents. This controversy did not originate with the Dissenters, but was occasioned by Mr. WHISTON's publishing in 1711, an historical preface to a larger work, in which he attacked the Athanasian opinions with regard to the Trinity, as being unscriptural, heretical, and contrary to the antient doctrine of the christian church. For this he was expelled from the mathematical professorship in the University of Cambridge. The Act of the University in expelling him, and his subsequent publications called the general attention to the subject
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of the Trinity, and the books and pamphlets written at that time by the Established Clergy were instrumental in leading the Dissenting Ministers into the same disputes. These disputes were carried on with a very unwarrantable degree of warmth in the West of England, particularly at Exeter. This will undoubtedly be acknowledged by all parties. And the candid and ingenuous Trinitarians who confess the truth of this observation, will not thereby in the smallest degree prejudice their cause: for should they even grant that their ancestors, hurried away by the impetuous spirit of the times, defended their religious opinions in a manner entirely inconsistent with the dictates of moderation and prudence, no rational conclusion can be drawn from this against the truth of their principles. Since it is well known, both by observation and experience, that very unjustifiable acts have been committed by men whose character and intentions, in the general were pure and upright; and that a good cause has been frequently maintained by methods that would not bear a rigorous examination. At the period of which we are speaking, the pen of controversy was universally sharpened.

—Hanc

—*Hanc veniam petimusque, damusque vicissim.*

It was the error of the times. Religious liberty was little understood, and very partially indulged by any denomination of Christians. But even these very contentions, like all other seeming evils, will appear to have answered beneficial purposes. They led many to enquire into the right of private judgment, and to entertain those more accurate notions of religious toleration and candour, which have since distinguished the Members of the Establishment and the Dissenters, in most of their writings.

By considering how widely learned and good men had differed from one another upon the subject of the Trinity, Mr. Towgood was convinced that the commonly received opinion could not reasonably be esteemed so fundamental an article of the christian faith as it was generally represented.—He did not call in question its truth, but the subject seemed to him so abstruse and difficult, that he could not imagine God had made the salvation of men to depend upon enter-

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taining

taining exactly the same notions concerning it, especially as the scripture never insists upon the necessity of our belief of it. During the agitation excited by this controversy, Mr. Towgood accustomed himself to a suspension of judgment on points so complicated and embarrassing. He enquired with coolness, deliberation, and at full leisure. He thought it the wisest course, at his season of life, to be slow, modest, and diffident till longer time, more patient enquiry, and enlarged experience had qualified him to form a final judgment.

From observing, also, the violent temper and imposing spirit with which this controversy was conducted, he was led to consider the authority on which all impositions on conscience were founded, and to imbibe those liberal and charitable principles to which he afterwards adhered, and for which he became so distinguished an advocate.

He was ordained at Moreton the 22d of August 1722, under the direction of the Assembly of Ministers.

Ministers*. He was no sooner settled than he immediately applied himself with unremitted attention to the discharge of his duty. He had no conception that the life of a Minister was to be an idle and trifling life. He considered the Ministry not only as a station of honour but of labour, to be supported, not by indolence and ease, but by active service. By no means satisfied with merely performing the customary duties of the Sabbath, he devoted a considerable portion of his time to private instruction,

Once

* In the year 1653, An Assembly of the Ministers of the Counties of Devon and Cornwall was formed for the purposes of brotherly counsel and advice. In the articles of Concord drawn up for this purpose, they agreed that they should not meddle with politics or the affairs of civil Government, or pretend to exercise any Church censures, but only to assist, advise, and encourage each other in propagating truth and holiness, and in keeping their Churches free from profane and scandalous Communicants. This institution opened and preserved a friendly correspondence among Ministers themselves, and the Congregations in the two united Counties, were hereby assisted in obtaining Ministers for their vacant Churches. The Assembly, on these occasions, examined the Testimonials of those who offered themselves as Candidates for the Ministry, appointed the Ordainers, and gave the subject for a Thesis to the Candidate. These Assemblies are continued to the present time, but it is now left wholly with the Congregations to satisfy themselves of the abilities and qualifications of the persons they chuse for their Ministers. At the time Mr. Towgood was ordained, the subject on which the Assembly desired him to treat was, "An Baptisma Infantum sit validum?"

Once in the week he had a religious exercise in his own house for the benefit of any of his Congregation whose leisure would allow them to attend. This service admitted, in some measure, of the freedom of conversation. His manner of behaviour, on these occasions, towards those whom he found well disposed was very engaging; and even his reproof was so delicately managed, that it seldom gave offence, the becoming gentleness with which it was urged making it always appear the effect of friendship. But his hopes were not so much in the present generation as in the succeeding. He found it to be an easier task to prevent vice than to correct it, and to form the young to virtue than to amend the long contracted habits of the aged. He employed much of his time, therefore, in endeavouring to improve the minds of the younger part of his flock, ever considering them as the principal object of a Minister's regard. "There is nothing on earth," says the excellent Maffillon, "so deserving our homage and respect as innocence. The innocence of children is committed to our care. Their faith, their religion is a sacred trust, which
 " God

" God has put into our hands. It is incumbent
 " on us to cultivate these young plants. It is
 " one of the most essential duties of the ministry.
 " But by how many is it neglected? I speak it
 " with grief. How many Congregations are there
 " where these poor neglected children scarcely
 " know the God whom they adore?"* 'They
need instruction, they are *capable* of improvement,
 and the whole interest of religion and the welfare
 of mankind have a dependance upon their future
 conduct. The next generation will consist en-
 tirely of the children planted in this. If they are
 neglected, or ill-instructed, religion will die in the
 succeeding age: if they are cultivated and well
 principled, they will diffuse a spirit of piety
 through every little region around them, and sow
 the seeds of virtue in the youth of the next ge-
 neration. It is, therefore, of infinite importance
 to cherish in their minds the principles of true
 religion, and the dispositions of piety, justice, and
 benevolence.

To promote these purposes, Mr. Towgood
 divided the town into certain districts, and cate-
 chized

* Maffillon Disc. Synodaux.

chized the children in each of these divisions in rotation. Many of the Catechumens are still living and retain the liveliest gratitude for the happy effects of those instructions.

To these duties he added familiar visits, and was careful to improve the opportunities which conversation afforded of diffusing and encreasing the influence of religion. Many of the Members of his Congregation were in poor and indigent circumstances, and most of them supported by their own industry; but this did not prevent him from calling on them at proper seasons. He visited them in the same spirit of humble piety with which he preached to them, to encourage their virtues, assist them with his counsel and advice, relieve their wants, and stimulate their industry, and that, being informed of the state of their minds and their manner of life, he might be enabled to conduct his ministry according to their particular circumstances,

During his residence in this place, he married Miss
HAWKER, daughter of JAMES HAWKER, Esq.
of

of Luppit, in the County of Devon. By this lady he had four children, one of whom only is still living, Mrs. SUSANNAH TOWGOOD, of Exeter.

Mr. TOWGOOD continued the Pastor of the Congregation till Christmas, 1736. A mutual esteem subsisted between him and the people of his charge, and nothing but the prospect of being more extensively useful, would have induced him to leave the Society. This prospect, however, opened to him on his receiving an invitation from Crediton, which, on mature deliberation, he thought it his duty to accept. His friends at Moreton could not resign so faithful a Pastor without regret, and they endeavoured, by the promise of making his salary equal to his expectations at Crediton, to retain him among them : but his conduct was governed by much weightier considerations than those of a pecuniary nature, and he removed to Crediton in the beginning of the year 1737.

As soon as he was settled in this Congregation, he pursued the same useful plans for the moral
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improvement of his hearers. He was "instant in season and out of season, exhorting with all long suffering and doctrine."

In all the instructions he delivered, one great object he had in view was to lead the people to think for themselves, and to inculcate the principles of religious liberty. Strongly attached to these principles himself, and thoroughly sensible of their importance, he was desirous of doing all in his power to extend their influence. With this view he published a small pamphlet, in the year 1737, under the title of "High flown episcopal and priestly claims examined, in a Dialogue between a Country Gentleman and a Country Vicar," wherein Church-Authority, Confirmation, Absolution, the Burial of the Dead, the power of Bishops to give the Holy Ghost, and of Priests to forgive Sins, the consecration of Churches, and bowing to the East, are particularly considered. In this publication the Reader will find a very judicious defence of the common rights of Christians, and of the sufficiency and perfection of scripture, as a rule of faith and practice,

tice, without the aid of human creeds and ceremonies.

In the following year two volumes of sermons by Dr. WARREN, a Clergyman in the neighbourhood of Exeter, were published by subscription, for the benefit of the family. The names of many Dissenters appeared in the list of subscribers, but, through the illiberality of the Editor, some of the sermons selected for publication were filled with invectives against them, and in one of them particularly, their Dissent is compared to the Schism of the Samaritans. At the time these sermons were printed, this charge was frequently brought against the Dissenters, and the question concerning it was deemed of the greatest consequence.* In these

* Many of the Clergy of those days represented the schism of the Dissenters in the most reproachful light. Dr. SOUTH calls it "a schism that, unrepented of, will as infallibly ruin their souls, as theft, whoredom, murder, or any other of the most crying damning sins whatever." It is some relief under this load of reproach to be kept in countenance by the opinion of the pious, ingenious, learned, and sweet tempered Bishop TAYLOR, as Dr. JORTIN calls him. "Such men," says this worthy Prelate, "would do well to consider whether or not such proceedings do not derive the guilt of schism upon them who least think of it; and whether of the two is the schismatic; he that makes unnecessary and (supposing the state of things) inconvenient impositions, or he that

these more liberal times it will be confessed by all, excepting some recluse bigots, that a man who sincerely worships his Maker according to the real dictates of his conscience, whether within the pale of the Church or out of it, is an object of salvation.

To wipe off the odium such a charge was at that time calculated to bring on the Dissenters, Mr. Towgood, the next year, 1739, published "The Dissenter's Apology," in which he fully vindicated their principles and conduct from this groundless censure, and entered into the consideration

disobeys them because he cannot without doing violence to his conscience believe them; he that parts communion because he could not, without sin, entertain it; or they that have made it necessary for him to separate by requiring such conditions, which to no man are simply necessary, and to his particular are either sinful or impossible." Much to same purpose is the opinion of the ever memorable JOHN HALES of Eaton. "If the spiritual guides and fathers of the Church would be a little sparing of incumbering Churches with superfluities, and not over rigid in reviving obsolete customs or imposing new, there would be far less danger of Schism or Superstition. Meanwhile wheresoever false or suspected opinions are made a piece of church liturgy, he who separates is not the Schismatic, but he who imposes." These liberal and rational principles have lately been set in a very clear point of view, and defended with great strength of argument in the Assize Sermons of the Rev. Mr. MANNING, Rector of Dis.

ation of Schism, Church Authority, and Civil Establishments in Religion.

About the same time he wrote three Numbers in the periodical publication called the Old Whig, under the signature of Paulus.* The subjects of the papers were the order for reading the Apocryphal Romances of Tobit, Bell and the Dragon, and the Services of Confirmation and Absolution. He has shewn, in these papers, the dangerous tendency of these offices, in encouraging men to hope for the favour of God, whilst destitute of moral rectitude and purity of heart,

In 1741, the nation being engaged in a war with Spain, and disheartened by the unfortunate issue of the expedition against Carthage, Mr. Towgood published a pamphlet under the title of "Spanish Cruelty and Injustice, a justifiable Plea for a vigorous War with Spain, and a rational Ground for Hopes of Success." In this publication he encouraged his countrymen to hope for success, by representing to them, in animated lan-

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guage,

* Vol. 2, No. 83, 90, 91.

guage, the justice of the war on the part of Great-Britain ; by a recital of the cruelties and barbarities exercised by their enemies on Pagans, Jews, Mahometans, and Christians ; and by shewing their vain dependance on false and fictitious protectors.

In the year 1742 he published a pamphlet, under the title of "Recovery from Sicknefs." It was intended as a present to those of the congregation who were lately raised from dangerous disorders, and contained serious reflections, resolutions and devotions suitable to such occasions. This pamphlet has passed through three editions in this country, and a large impression was printed in America, under the direction of Dr. MAYHEW of New England.

No important occurrences distinguished this part of Mr. TOWGOOD's life, excepting those which related to him as a writer. Indeed adventures rarely mark the lives of the good and learned. The history of a studious man can consist of little more than a character of himself and his writings. But in the year 1743, during his residence
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at Crediton, an event took place which is worthy recording, on account of the amiable light in which this worthy Pastor appeared, and the important services he rendered to the inhabitants of the town. In this year a most dreadful fire broke out, by which 450 families were deprived of their dwellings. The town consisted chiefly of two streets, and the devastation extended for more than half a mile on one side of the longest of these streets, not leaving a single house standing, and but a small part on the opposite side. The loss sustained was estimated at £.40,000. This awful event was sufficient to excite the compassion of persons however distant and unconnected; it is not therefore to be wondered that Mr. Towgood, who was an eye witness of the awful scene, and intimately acquainted with the sufferers, should immediately exert himself to the utmost to lessen the affliction. His house, his purse was open to their relief. In connection with the Rev. Mr. STACEY, the Minister of the Established Church, he solicited subscriptions, and was particularly successful in procuring a very considerable sum of money. By these benevolent exertions he secured
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to himself the esteem of the inhabitants of every description, and to minds thus well prepared for receiving his instructions with gratitude and respectful attention, he preached the following sabbath, on a subject so highly interesting to their feelings, and led his audience to consider the hand of God in an event, which he exhorted them suitably to improve. His sermon on this occasion was immediately printed, and was of no small service in exciting public attention to the deplorable state of the inhabitants.

This part of Mr. Towgood's life offers an useful lesson to Ministers in general, animating them to cherish a real and tender affection towards the people committed to their care, as a means of encreasing their power of usefulness. A sincere good will, expressed by a constant series of kind offices, composing differences, extinguishing animosities, comforting the melancholy heart, giving counsel to the dejected spirit, suspending pain by sympathy and personal condolence, visiting the sick and praying by them with fervency, suggesting to an unfurnished mind proper materials for meditation

meditation in the time of distress, relieving indigence, and conveying valuable instruction in seasons of providential visitation ; these are the surest means of gaining the love and confidence of mankind ; they are powerful charms which rarely fail to conciliate the affection of all. The meanest as well as the most elevated capacities perceive and feel their force. As our Saviour's miracles of mercy in healing the bodily diseases of mankind, prepared them to receive him as the compassionate physician of souls, so, when Ministers thus assist in relieving the necessities of others, their charity insinuates into the hearts of their people such an affectionate veneration as will give all their exhortations an authority and force almost irresistible. It was a saying of Austin, "*Dilige, & dic quicquid voles. Si potes, da; si non potes, affabilem te fac,*"

The year 1745 threatened to involve us in all the horrors of civil war. The daring Emissary of a popish Pretender invaded this peaceful island, unused to scenes of violence and blood, and with a crew of lawless rebels, threatened

threatened ruin and destruction to our civil and religious liberties, and slavery, persecution and death to all who should refuse to make shipwreck of a good conscience. The existence of the protestant religion in this kingdom depended on the event of a war; and it was the policy of the papists at this juncture, to soften down the minds of protestants to an easy admission of popery. It became therefore the duty of protestant Ministers, of all denominations, to unite in calling the attention of the people to the principles of their religion, and to shew them that the Roman Church is a grand apostacy or departure from the christian faith, and utterly subversive of the very nature and design of the religion of Christ. In this year, therefore, Mr. Towgood preached and published a sermon containing a summary view of the errors, absurdities and iniquities of popery, shewing its worship to be idolatrous, its doctrine corrupt, and its moral conduct entirely repugnant to the precepts of our divine Master.

From the same loyal and public spirited motives he published, in a small pamphlet, Bishop
Burnet

Burnet and Bishop Lloyd's account of the birth of the Pretender, shewing the strong grounds there were to suspect it to be a shameful imposture.

In the same year, when Mr. WHITE had brought a heinous charge of Schism against the Dissenters, on account of their separation from the Established Church, Mr. TOWGOOD signalized himself in the cause of christian truth and liberty, by the "Dissenting Gentleman's Letters," in answer to Mr. WHITE.* These Letters have been highly and deservedly esteemed by the friends of the religious rights of mankind, and the supreme authority of the scriptures; and even many liberal minds in the Establishment have felt and con-

* Mr. JOHN WHITE, B. D. Fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge, and Vicar of Ospring, Kent. The publications of Mr. WHITE were three letters to a gentleman dissenting from the Church of England. These letters were first printed in 1743 and were several times reprinted in 1745, 1746, 1747, and again (collected into one volume) in 1748. Mr. WHITE was also the author of a sermon on the fast Dec. 18, 1745. A defence of the letters to a Dissenting Gentleman 1746, reprinted in 1748, and 1749. A second defence in 1748, and 1749. A letter to Dr. CHANDLER, 1749. A Discourse against the Dissenters, 1750. An Appendix to the controversy between Mr. WHITE and the Dissenting Gentleman, 1750. The Protestant Dissenter guided to the Church of England. An answer to the free and candid Disquisitions, 1751. The Protestant Englishman guarded against the arts and arguments of Roman Papists and emissaries, 1753, and some other controversial treatises in 1755.

confessed their force. They are indeed composed with a strength of argument, acuteness of discussion, and animation of language, which entitle them to a distinguished rank amongst controversial writings. —Nor are they less commendable for their fairness and candour. Mr. TOWGOOD, conscious of the goodness of his cause, and of the united powers of Reason and Scripture on his side, rises superior to the common arts of controversy, and while meeting his opponent with a spirit of manly freedom, amidst the ardour of contention, preserves an unruffled temper; nor in the Disputant ever forgets the Gentleman. His good sense enabled him to see at once, that there would be no end to cavilling on particular points; he therefore judiciously made his main attack on the foundation itself of all religious imposition and usurpation, the claim of Church Authority. He justly observes, that the controversy turns on the single point of the Twentieth Article of the Church of England, “that the Church hath power to decree rites and ceremonies, and hath authority in matters of faith.” This position he overthrows in a masterly manner, and proves “that the Church (to use his own words) hath really and in truth no power at all,

nor

nor authority of his kind—that Christ, the great Lawgiver and King of his Church has expressly commanded, that no power of this kind shall ever be claimed, or ever be yielded by any of his followers—that the Church is reprehensible and highly criminal before God, which usurps this power,” consequently—“ that the Dissenters are justified, and will have honour before God, for entering their protest against usurpation; for asserting the rights and privileges of the Christian Church; and standing fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made them free.”

To enter particularly into the state of this controversy seems needless, as Mr. TOWGOOD's book is generally known and read, and will most probably continue to be read among Protestant Dissenters, and appealed to, as a complete and unanswerable vindication of the rights of private judgment, and a Dissent from all Human Authority whatever in matters of religion.

It may not however be improper to observe that Mr. WHITE seems to have been greatly em-

barrassed in the course of his controversy by a question, strongly and repeatedly urged upon him by his opponent—"who are these Governors of the Church, in whom this power of decreeing rites and ceremonies, and this authority in matters of faith are lodged?" A question surely necessary to be resolved, that we may know to whom we are to submit our faith and consciences. Mr. WHITE wishes all along to have it understood, that the Bishops and Clergy, the spiritual Rulers of the Church, are the persons thus invested: but this in the Church of England is contrary to fact.—Mr. TOWGOOD has proved with the strongest evidence, that neither Priests nor Bishops, nor both in convocation assembled, have any power and authority to decree or repeal a single rite or ceremony, or establish or to annul a single article of faith—that all authority of this kind is lodged in the King and Parliament,—they only can make and unmake forms and rites of worship—they only can authoritatively prescribe to the Clergy what they are to believe and to preach; that the Church of England is a Parliamentary Church, of which the King is the head; or if it should so happen,
the

the Queen, a Woman, is posselt of ecclesiastical Supremacy over all the learned Doctors and Bishops of the land, and Judge in the dernier resort of Heresy! Mr. WHITE found himself here in a dilemma—to answer the question by saying—that the Bishops and Clergy were these Governors—would have been asserting what he was conscious he could not prove, and committing himself in a quarrel with the State,—to say—the King and Parliament—would have been giving up that authority, which he wished to invest solely in the hands of Spiritual Men, the Bishops and Clergy,—therefore, though repeatedly pressed on this point, he chose to be prudently and perseveringly silent.

It must indeed have been a mortifying consideration to one who had stood forth the zealous champion of Ecclesiastical Authority, to find, on examination, that all this power and authority, which he would claim as the sole right of the Bishops and Clergy, is in the present constitution of things, a mere nullity,—that the Church is a mere creature of the State—and that the Convocation

cation itself is now less than 'vox, et præterea nihil,' as, though yet suffered to meet, it is not suffered to deliberate, and is only in fact, 'magni nominis umbra,' a shadow that just flits before our eyes, suddenly and totally to disappear.

At the same time it must be a melancholy reflection to a serious mind, that the Divine Religion, which the Father of Lights has revealed by his beloved Son, the Lord Jesus, and established on his own authority, to purify the hearts of men, and raise them above the mean considerations of earth and time ; to promote the virtue, the peace, the perfection and eternal welfare of every human being, should ever have been made subservient to the purposes of worldly interest and ambition, and turned into an engine of spiritual domination, or of political expedience. But such has been, and such, it is to be feared, ever will be the consequence of a civil establishment of religion, guarded by subscriptions, and supported by worldly dignities and emoluments. Human interests will predominate, where spiritual principles only should govern. Insincere and interested men, eager for
a share

a share in the spoil, will rush in, where many an honest man dare not tread; and a kingdom *not* of this world, will become, to all intents and purposes a mere kingdom of *this* world. When religion is thus circumstanced, nothing less than a continued miracle can preserve it in it's purity.

But, thanks be to God, fairer prospects seem opening upon us. The world is growing more enlightened and more liberal. "The freedom of thinking in which the present age glories, is dissipating apace the charm of spiritual forcery, by which the understandings and consciences of men in former ages were enthralled.*" The principles of religious liberty and the right of private judgment are virtually espoused, by a very respectable number of the Clergy of the established Church; "for all those who print, speak, or even think on religious subjects, in any degree contrary to the articles which they have subscribed, renounce the authority of the Church in matters of faith." And when once truth can obtain a hearing, she will gradually and finally prevail.

Mean-

* Towceood's Dissent, p. 332, last Edit.

Meanwhile let us revere the memory of those worthies by whom, under Providence, so happy a change has been affected; who have exerted themselves with wisdom and integrity in the cause of civil and religious liberty; and by their writings have contributed to emancipate the human mind; to restore to reason its true dignity, to conscience its sacred rights; and to fix our faith, as christians, on the only foundation on which it can stand secure, the word and authority of GOD. Glorious will their names ever shine in the British annals. Future generations will rise and call them blessed!

This publication had a very extensive circulation, and was the means of introducing it's Author to the acquaintance of persons of great literary character, both in England and America. Many letters of thanks were sent him for the service he had done to the cause of religious liberty, and particularly by Dr. CHAUNCY, of Boston, in New-England, who became his frequent correspondent, and under whose direction three editions of these Letters were printed in America, besides the six editions through which they passed in this country.

Whilst

Whilst Mr. TOWGOOD was thus reputably employed in vindicating the religious rights of mankind, he was not indifferent to their civil liberties. About the same time he published, in one small volume 8vo. an Essay on the Character of Charles the First.

No character in antient or modern History has been so differently represented, or has produced such violent debates as that of Charles the First; and yet it is of singular importance, to every one who wishes to be acquainted with the history and constitution of his country, to have a just idea of his conduct, and of the transactions during that unhappy and turbulent reign. This can only be obtained by stating the evidence on both sides with fairness and impartiality, and he who performs this task, with care and integrity, does honour to himself, and has an undoubted title to the thanks of the public. This is the plan pursued by Mr. TOWGOOD in his Essay. He brings into one point of view, whatever the most celebrated historians of the time had said upon the subject, and that the reader may judge what degree

of credit is due to the testimonies produced, he gives in his preface a succinct account of the historians from whom his authorities are drawn, and leaves him impartially to consider the evidence they offer, and to decide as his own discernment shall direct.

In an appendix the Author proves, from Bishop Burnet, Archdeacon Echard, Clarendon, Rapin, and Hume, that the Puritan or Presbyterian Clergy were the only body of men in the whole kingdom, who had the courage to oppose and protest against the trial and condemnation of the King, and petition for the life of the Royal Sufferer; and that they had the principal hand in restoring Charles II. to the throne of his ancestors.

These facts, however unattended to by the authors of those illiberal invectives which are occasionally lavished on the body of the Dissenters, are certainly deserving attention, since it clearly appears from their evidence, that the Protestant Dissenters are by no means enemies to the monarchical government of this country, but may be reckoned amongst its most zealous and consistent friends.

That

That they are not members of the Church of England they have always openly avowed, by the clearest and most decisive of all declarations, an uniform course of conduct. Besides the particular objections they have to a number of ceremonies, and to a form of prayer which they should not be permitted to adapt to their own views, by the alteration or omission of a single sentence; they found their dissent on what appear to them to be very important general reasons. They dissent, because they deny the right of any body of men, whether civil or ecclesiastical, to impose human tests, creeds, or articles, or to have any authority in matters of faith. They dissent, because they apprehend the Church of England, in requiring a subscription to her doctrines and ceremonies, claims and exercises a power derogatory to the honour of the great Master, the sole Lawgiver, and supreme Head of the Church. They rest entirely on the sufficiency of scripture, and the right of private judgment. It was upon this fundamental principle of gospel liberty the reformers of the English Church set out when they separated from the Church of Rome. If their conduct was com-

mendable, and can be justified by reasons of the highest importance; if *they* had a right to follow the dictates of their consciences in the great affairs of religion, and to protest against all attempts to infringe or deprive them of this privilege; the consequence is, that, since truth and reason are unchangeable in their nature, *every* man, in every age, hath an equal right to the same liberty. This, then, is the right which the Protestant Dissenters assume as the ground of their dissent.

What is there in these sentiments inconsistent with their retaining at the same time the warmest affection to the welfare of the State? Men may yield subjection to the civil laws of their country, and bear their share of the public burthens; be zealously attached to their sovereign, and benevolent to their fellow-subjects; unite with them in their endeavours to support the authority of government, and to resist their common enemies, whether foreign or domestic; and, in a word, enter cheerfully into every measure which is necessary to advance the peace, prosperity, and reputation of their country, though they may differ widely in
their

their religious sentiments, from their superiors, or the majority of those about them. Nor is this mere theory. It is certain and notorious fact.—Whoever looks back to the period of the Restoration, and candidly considers the conduct of the Dissenters, as Mr. TOWGOOD has fairly represented it, will want no farther confirmation of what is here asserted.

Nor are their political principles altered since that period. The Dissenters of the present day are too much attached to the civil constitution of their country, to entertain a wish of altering its form of government. They have a decided preference for monarchical government. They respect a body of Nobles, which in a political view, have little or no resemblance to the Nobility of France; and they regard with veneration, the weight which is given to the people at large by the voice of the House of Commons.*

In all the changes that have occurred during the two last centuries, in situations the most arduous, and

* See the Declaration of the Protestant Dissenters in Yorkshire.

and in the most dreadful convulsions of an eventful period, when the principles and fortitude of men were put to the severest trial, they do not hesitate to challenge a comparison between the Protestant Dissenters and the most distinguished of their fellow subjects. It is not ostentation that dictates this challenge, but, having been misrepresented as Levellers, Republicans, and Persons undeserving of national confidence, they are compelled to support their character in the most open and explicit manner, persuaded that the more strictly their conduct is examined, the more unfulfilled will their reputation and honour be acknowledged, and the more clearly will they appear to be the steady and determined friends of our admired constitution.

When they consider from what quarter these invectives against them proceed, they cannot avoid observing that their zealous efforts, their cordial concurrence with the Bishops, under the reign of the second Charles and James, and on the death of Queen Anne, to preserve the *whole* constitution in Church and State, and to guard against the inroads of popish tyranny, entitles them to a more
generous

generous representation of their principles. It is with great pleasure they reflect that many members of the established religion have spoken more favourably of their Protestant Brethren. Dr. EDWARDS, a Divine of the Church of England, thus very candidly expresses himself. "If we would but open our eyes, we should see that we are beholden to the Dissenters for the continuance of a great part of our theological principles; for if the high-churchmen had no checks, they would have brought in popery before this time, by their overvaluing pomp and ceremony in divine worship. So that if there had been no Dissenters the Church of England had been long since ruined."*

The Dissenters are always happy in testifying their respect to gentlemen who treat them with such candour and liberality, and with pleasure acknowledge that many persons of this liberal disposition are to be met with among the Clergy. Far be it from them to depreciate the character of a single individual of the Establishment. "Great is the felicity of this nation, in having so many of

* Dr. Edward's Preacher, vol. 2. page 133.

of it's established Clergy, whose learning and whose lives reflect honour on their profession, and whose writings have blessed the world with some of the noblest defences of virtue and religion.* They must be lost to all sense of excellency who are not struck with the piety of a TILLOTSON, the integrity of a CLARKE, the christian principles of a HOADLEY, and the generous and enlarged sentiments of a WATSON. The Dissenters are happy to declare that they esteem many among the Clergy of the present day, as men who do honour to their profession and themselves, by their learning and ability, as well as by their liberal and Catholic principles. The writer himself rejoices in the acquaintance of many Clergymen who are ornaments to human nature, and whose acquaintance it will be his ambition to cultivate.

The Reader will excuse this digression. It is a sacrifice to truth and friendship, and I shall never scruple to go a little out of my road to perform so sacred and so pleasing a rite.

I now

* Mr. TOWGOOD's Serious and Free Thoughts, &c. p. 299.

I now proceed to observe, that another edition of this Essay on the Character of Charles the Ist. was published by Mr. Parker, the Printer of the General Advertiser in 1780, without Mr. TOWGOOD's being made acquainted with his intentions. It was afterwards reviewed as a new publication in the Monthly Review, and some very severe reflections were cast upon the writer for asserting, on the authority of Oldmixon, that *Ld. Clarendon's History of the Rebellion* lay under the suspicion of being softened and garbled in favour of the royal cause. This circumstance was mentioned by Oldmixon on the authority of EDMUND SMITH, the Poet, who said, with his dying breath, that he was employed for this purpose. This charge of Oldmixon's was believed by many persons to be well-founded, at the time the first edition of this Essay was printed, but Dr. JOHNSON and others have since proved, to the satisfaction of the world in general, as well as Mr. TOWGOOD himself, that it was entirely groundless. The original manuscript has been seen by many respectable gentlemen, and amongst others, by Dr. BIRCH and Dr. BURTON, whose evidence is unquestionable.

Had the printer of the second edition consulted Mr. TOWGOOD before he took the liberty of printing the Essay, I am confident the passage would have been omitted.

On the death of Mr. GREEN, in 1749, Mr. TOWGOOD was invited to become co-pastor with Mr. LAVINGTON, Mr. WALROND, and Mr. STEPHEN TOWGOOD, his Cousin, in the two united Congregations of Dissenters in Exeter.

Before he determined on the step he should take, he wrote to several of his brethren in the ministry for advice, and when by their pressing desire, he removed to Exeter, he was followed by the prayers and good wishes of those whom every honest man would be ambitious to please; and there are many still living at Crediton who retain a strong and grateful sense of his incessant and tender sollicitude for their welfare.

A new scene now opened upon him, in which he had many difficulties to encounter, arising from the prejudices of several persons to his religious
 opinions

opinions. It required no small degree of prudence and address to overcome these impediments to his usefulness. He was too well acquainted with the human mind to expect to succeed by an unseasonable and hasty intrusion of his own views of the doctrines of christianity. The understanding is not to be taken by assault, but to be won by gentle and gradual approaches. Mr. Towgood never gave up what he thought an essential article of faith in order to please men; but by his justly acquired reputation as a writer, by diligent and affectionate assiduity in the various branches of the pastoral office, and by the force of christian meekness, condescension, and a readiness to do them all kinds of good offices, he conciliated their affection and esteem, and constrained them to forego their objections. He considered and accommodated himself to the different tempers, prejudices, and infirmities of mankind, as far as a good conscience would allow, and imagined himself fully justified in this conduct, by the behaviour of our blessed Lord and his Apostles, and the prudential and pacific maxims of the New Testament.* They

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who

* To this conduct it has been objected, that if all men acted on this principle no reformation could ever have been expected. To a similar

who think this too great a submission, do not sufficiently distinguish between a servile compliance with the practices of the world, which religion forbids, and that innocent condescension to its weakness which the gospel, not only allows, but recommends as essential to success in the christian ministry.

In every instance in which Mr. TOWGOOD conceived the moral improvement and religious liberty of his hearers to be concerned, he acted with fortitude and zeal without the harshness and severity with which they are too frequently accompanied

At his first entrance on his pastoral duties at Exeter, he found a custom had prevailed respecting the admission of members to the communion, which

objection a sensible writer furnishes us with this answer. "Far, very far be this from my design. Yet had I renewed opportunities of preaching to a Society of Papists, and were bent on their reformation, tho' I could never say I believed transubstantiation, purgatory, &c, nor even hint that they might possibly be true, yet I would not shock their prejudices at once, but rather keep the disputed things out of sight, 'till the foundations were laid, 'till I had gained a share in their confidence, and with more advantage could sap the foundation of error, and open the truth to their view."

THEOL. REPOS. v. 3. p. 119.

which he thought unwarranted by scripture, and often attended with mischievous consequences.

Every particular church is a select religious society, and all its members have an undoubted right to be satisfied of the character and qualifications of every new member, previous to his admission into the society. *Thus far is plain from the very nature and design of such an institution. But in judging of these qualifications we are strictly to adhere to scripture as our rule. We are to remember it is not a human society, guarded by human laws, but a religious association, under the direction of laws established by Jesus Christ. It is formed upon the ground of his authority; it acts under his direction. It has not, therefore, like human societies, a right to establish new laws by general consent, and to excommunicate, or in any way exclude such as reject or violate any of these arbitrary regulations. The laws of Christ alone are the rule by which its members are to be governed, and whatever determines the christian character, must also determine the right to this communion. If we are contented with scripture
rule,

rule, we may unite in christian communion, though we cannot in opinion.

The terms of communion in the societies with which Mr. Towgood now became connected, had been used to require a more particular examination of the candidate than he thought the scriptures countenanced, which tended to discourage meek, humble and modest persons, whilst it rendered it easily accessible to men of bold and forward dispositions, who were tempted to declare more than they really experienced lest the church should reject them. He esteemed a christian life a very sufficient and a much better rule, because he did not find the scriptures required any other; and, if the society were satisfied of this, he thought it not material by what means it received the information: from this time, therefore, it was left to the ministers to converse privately with the candidate, and enquire into his knowledge of the nature and design of this ordinance, and whether his views, in desiring to join in it were sincere and upright. When the Ministers were satisfied in these points, they mentioned the name of the person

on one month preceding his admission. This liberal and catholic conduct has been continued from the time of Mr. Towgood's first settlement at Exeter. In the decline of life he felt great pleasure in reflecting that, whilst our brethren in the Establishment and many Dissenting Churches fenced round their communion table with terms and conditions, forms and rites which Christ never prescribed, the Church with which he had been connected was founded upon, what he thought, a more scriptural and apostolic plan. Addressing himself to these societies, in the last public act of his life, he mentions this circumstance to their honour. "You lay your communion open to every sincere christian to whatever denomination or party he belongs. Whatever his peculiar notion or speculations may be as to doubtful and disputed matters, if you have reason to believe him an honest and sincere, however mistaken man, you receive him, as you are commanded, but not to doubtful disputation, and give him this pledge of your affection and esteem, that you consider and behave towards him as a fellow-servant, and a christian brother *.

Whilst

* Address to the Societies on resigning the Pastoral Charge.

Whilst Mr. Towgood was thus zealously engaged in fulfilling his own ministry, he was no less desirous of promoting zeal in others. He was always ready to engage in public services at the stated Assemblies of Ministers; and was peculiarly pleased when he had opportunities of animating and encouraging his younger brethren by taking a part in the service at their Ordinations. He considered the solemnity of Ordination, as well calculated to prevent the intrusion of ignorant and unworthy men into religious offices, and to impress the mind of a Minister with a lively sense of the dignity and importance of the charge he is about to undertake. So far was he from considering it as an imposition on the conscience to insist upon a scriptural rite, and apostolic practice and appointment, that he was rather inclined to think those guilty of imposition, who, dispensing with scriptural rules, intruded themselves upon the public without complying with religious forms. The common objection to this service, that many persons have conceived erroneous and superstitious notions concerning it, he did not think a sufficient reason for discontinuing a practice so reasonable in itself, and so beneficial in
its

its effects. The abolition of a scriptural; apostolic practice, on account of the possible abuse of it, was, in his opinion unwarrantable, more especially when it could be proved from scripture, that this service was performed when no office was conferred, and no extraordinary gifts were communicated.

In a letter now before me, Mr. TOWGOOD thus expresses himself on this subject, to a friend whose Son had lately been ordained.

“ I congratulate my worthy and dear Brother on the pleasing prospect, that his name and spirit will still live and shine and animate the Christian Church, when himself shall be called to a better world. I have just read the service at the solemnity of your amiable Son's ordination, and thank you for one of the best charges that I ever heard read on such an occasion. I am sorry to find that some of our younger brethren, who are rising up to succeed us, affect to treat the solemnity of our Ordinations with such cool indifference, and to wish to sink it into a total neglect. Two more rational, learned, and liberal Divines, than HAL-

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LETT, of Exeter, and BREKEL, of Liverpool, the present age has scarce produced; and both have published, each a Tract to shew the reasonableness, propriety, and usefulness of this solemnity. I wish these young Gentlemen would read carefully these Tracts, they would then think more soberly and justly on the subject."

In 1750 Mr. TOWGOOD published a pamphlet under the title of " The Baptism of Infants a reasonable service; founded upon scripture, and undoubted apostolic tradition; in which its moral purpose and use in religion are shewn."

In this treatise, the Author represents the rite rather as a standing token, than as a proper instrument, and mean of God's mercy and grace to us; as a perpetual memorial instituted in the church, signifying to believers God's readiness to pour down his spirit upon them, and his blessing upon their offspring. The argument from antiquity, or apostolic tradition, had never been presented to the public in so contracted and clear a light before this publication, and succeeding writers on the subject

ject have frequently owned their obligations to Mr. TOWGOOD for the assistance they received from this part of the treatise. This pamphlet was of late become very scarce, and its author received many applications for a new edition of it; and, (I mention it with great pleasure as an instance of liberality) some gentlemen, of considerable literary character in Oxford joined in the application. In compliance with the wishes of his friends, Mr. TOWGOOD permitted a third edition to be published in the beginning of the year 1791. Besides the three editions published in this country, large impressions were printed in America, by Dr. MAYHEW and Dr. CHAUNCEY.

This pamphlet was followed the next year by another publication, entitled, "Dipping not the only scriptural and primitive mode of baptizing." It was written with a view to vindicate Christianity from the unworthy imputation of laying so much stress, as has been done, upon a point so entirely circumstantial and external as dipping, and to persuade Christians, who thought differently on this subject, to mutual forbearance and charity;

a matter doubtless of infinitely more importance than the quantity of water, or the manner of its application. That is baptism, christian baptism to every individual, which he himself thinks to be so, after impartial enquiry and examination. Those who reject infant baptism and sprinkling, as well as those who practise them, agree in the belief of the sacred institution of the ordinance. They both allow, that children should be devoted to God, and should grow up under all possible obligations to duty, and since they both sincerely endeavour to find out the will of Christ and practice it accordingly, how unreasonable is it to break off christian fellowship, and live at enmity with each other, because some are devoted to God and Christ, by this ceremony, a little sooner than others; or because there is a difference in opinion on so immaterial a point as the quantity of water necessary for this rite, and the manner of its application. This is surely to dishonour our sacred religion, and too naturally brings not only christian baptism, but christianity itself into contempt. Where faith in Jesus Christ, love to God, and obedience to his will, are considered as necessary to salvation,

salvation, and agreed upon by all; a liberal and candid mind will regret that these lesser things should be the occasion of disunion in christian charity, and prevent our worshipping together in the same Assembly, eating at the same table of Christ our common Lord, and walking in perfect communion and fellowship with one another*.

We have already given an account of the Assembly of Ministers of the two united counties of Devon and Cornwall, and mentioned some of the excellent purposes it was calculated to serve†. But, as every human institution partakes of the imperfection of its origin, so this association being formed at a period, when religious liberty was very imperfectly understood, it is no wonder that some of its rules should have breathed the contracted spirit of its pious, but misjudging founders. The Assembly, when it appointed some of its members to assist at an ordination, was used to insist upon such qualifications from the candidate as the scripture never required. It was, therefore, chargeable with assuming an unlawful jurisdiction over the

* See Appendix.

† See note page 112

the consciences of men. Mr. Towgood, with many other members considered it in this light. They perceived that the admitting one unscriptural Test to be imposed, by an order of the Assembly, as a necessary term of admission to the christian ministry, was a matter of very serious moment, and might draw after it consequences extremely important. For one being admitted, two, or ten, or thirty-nine might with equal right hereafter be added: the consequences of which were too obvious to be unobserved, and too formidable not to be an object of dread.—It being therefore proposed in the Assembly, which met in May 1753, to take into consideration the following question, “Whether the Assembly will recommend any candidates to ordination who refuse to declare their faith in the Deity of the Son and the Holy Ghost,” it was debated, “Whether the said question should be put,” and it was decided by a majority in the negative.

This debate would probably have given rise to very warm animosities had they not been very seasonably discountenanced by the truly catholic
and

and conciliating conduct of some aged Ministers. The candid reader, it is presumed, will not think I go too far out of my way in transcribing the following letter written on this occasion by the Rev. Mr. BARON, of Plymouth. However uninteresting the debate which gave rise to it, the sentiments it contains deserve to be preserved and inculcated through every age of the christian church.

Plymouth, July 6, 1753.

Rev. and Dear Sir,

“As I am overtaken with age, and bowed down with infirmities, the time of my public service, and even of my continuance in this world must be towards a close. May you and others live long and be useful, when I shall be sleeping in the dust! In this evening of my day, next to a regard to my own future safety and welfare, is my concern for others; that true religion may be continued amongst them, whereby the honour of God, of Christ, and the Holy Spirit are to be preserved. The bad lives of some, and the fierce contentions of other professing christians, will, I fear, make me go sorrowing to the grave.

“Give

“ Give me leave to tell you of some things before your, and in my time. Several years since some hot unwary persons took, as was thought, too great freedom in disparaging and opposing the commonly received doctrine concerning the ever-blessed Trinity; whereupon it was judged necessary that every Minister should declare his faith as to that point in the Assembly. This was done by most, and refused by few. The silence of some, and the declarations of others, in terms that were not liked, brought on such animosities, distractions, and divisions, between Ministers and people, as I hoped never to see or hear more. Many learned and good men, who I doubt not, are now in heaven, and others going thither, fell under great hardships and sufferings that I did not then foresee, whom I heartily pitied, helping some of them, according to my narrow abilities, in their distress. Observing these sad and rueful effects, I long since determined never to say or do what might bear hard upon my brethren, who are accomplished with learning, do lead good lives, do believe the divine authority of the sacred scriptures, and particularly all that therein is expressly
said

said of God the Father, of God the Son; and of God the Holy Ghost.

“ I was much grieved, and still am, at what passed lately in the Assembly at Exeter. Had I been there, I would have done all I could to preserve peace and love, and would have desired that nothing more might be required of those that offer themselves to the Ministry, than, to the best of my knowledge and remembrance has been required of any that for more than fifty years proposed themselves. I know that wise and good men have in some things always differed; and, I believe, always will, until they come to the state of light and perfection, where all shall soon be much wiser and better than here; and brethren should not fall out in the way thither. Far am I from judging and censuring any that differ from me; believing them to be conscientious, good men, inquisitive after truth, and ready to embrace it, I esteem and love them: and such, I am persuaded, were many on all sides that were at the late debate.

“ Let us, that are Ministers, remember—that the Servants of the Lord must not strive, but be
 I patient,

patient, gentle to all men, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves. In the course of my life and Ministry, I have often found that a little prudence, and a great deal of patience, have made great conquests. In no one congregation are Ministers and all the people, nor are the people among themselves, all exactly, in every thing, of one and the same mind: Nevertheless, whereto they have attained, they should walk in love by the same rule, holding to Christ the same head.

“ People should not entertain groundless jealousies, or throw out uncharitable surmises concerning worthy Ministers, who live well, and preach well; and so render their labours useless, and their lives grievous, to the great discouragement of others to prepare for and enter on the Ministry, to the dissolving our general Assembly, to the shutting up the doors of many churches, and to the destroying, in this part of the world, Nonconformity, which I am fully persuaded is the cause of Christ. But if any are of a discontented, fierce, dividing temper and behaviour, let us pity them and pray for them, and after doing for them

what

what good we can, if in vain, let us leave them to God and themselves. At the same time, let such as are of a more christian temper and carriage hold together, encourage and strengthen one another, marking those who would cause divisions, and avoiding them. And, it is to be hoped, men's inflamed minds will by degrees cool, passions will subside, and prejudices will wear off, whereupon quiet, charity and love, through the goodness and grace of God, may ensue.

“ I hope, my good Brother, you will kindly excuse my troubling you with this very long letter. If there be any thing in it that may be of service to you or others, I shall attain my end in writing. Let us, while in this dark, imperfect state, at least by our prayers, be as helpful to one another as we can. And let us encourage ourselves with the thoughts that we have a kind master who can support his faithful servants here, and will plentifully reward them hereafter.

“ I am, with great sincerity, &c.

PETER BARON.”

To the Rev. Mr. Walrond.

Many other letters were written by Mr. BARON which had a happy effect on the minds of those to whom they were addressed. Mr. Towgood was charmed with the moderation and candour of this venerable Minister, and thus expressed his thanks for his pacific interference.

Exeter, Dec. 8, 1753.

Rev. and Dear Sir,

“ I esteem myself greatly obliged, because greatly delighted by your letter to Mr. WALROND. I cannot but think, Sir, you are employed in a most noble and important part of the ministerial character in thus promoting peace on earth and good will amongst men. A service, most certainly, highly pleasing to him who is styled the prince of peace; and a service highly beneficial and salutary to his church, whose bleeding wounds you are kindly attempting to bind up.

“ As you have been enabled (in a manner not so common as it might be wished in religious disputes) to act up to the apostolic rule of speaking the truth in love, it must necessarily have
great

great weight and make some happy impressions. The soft but strong light which your letters have let in upon some excellent minds, hath already, I am persuaded, had exceeding good effect. When we are drawing near the world of peace, where all the children of God shall be gathered together in one, how desirable is it to feel one's mind opening all its social and benevolent affections, and enlarging itself to embrace all righteous and good men, however differing from us here. Your own mind, Sir, is ripening apace for that happy state, expecting shortly to be translated thither. And you cannot leave behind you a more valuable or important legacy than those labours of love in which you have travelled. As you are every day drawing nearer, may you feel more of the celestial flame which is the light and life of those regions of bliss.

" May your day of service amongst us, Sir, be greatly prolonged, and your sun set at last bright and serene, and open to you a joyful entrance into the regions of perfect light.

" I am, Rev. Sir, your's, &c.

" MIC. TOWGOOD."

Mr,

Mr. Towgood again appeared before the public in the year 1756, as the author of a very seasonable and spirited pamphlet, under the title of "Serious and free Thoughts on the present State of the Church and Religion," occasioned by the Bishop of Oxford's charge to his Clergy, wherein his Lordship drew a melancholy picture of the times. Hence our author took occasion, with a becoming freedom, to point out some of the causes of the prevalence of scepticism, which seemed not to have been so thoroughly and so seriously adverted to, as their importance deserved. The principal cause on which he insists is the general apprehension that the Clergy are not themselves thoroughly persuaded of the truth and importance of the christian religion, inasmuch as they solemnly subscribe to articles they do not really believe, and declare their unfeigned assent and consent to forms, in divine worship, which they highly disapprove, perhaps, heartily condemn. This object he sets in a strong point of view, and shews the fatal consequences arising from it to the cause of religion in general. This pamphlet has been well received and passed thro' five editions *.

In

* Bishop Burnet accounts for the general contempt of religion in the same manner.

In 1758, he published a sermon, preached at Exeter, on the Lord's day, after receiving the account of the taking of Cape Breton.

The next year Mr. Towgood met with a severe trial in the loss of Mrs. Towgood. He had lived thirty-five years with his lady, who, like himself, was a model of the conjugal virtues. Both of them exhibited a pleasing example of all the felicity resulting from the reciprocal effusions of unabated tenderness and esteem. The separation was painful, and he felt like a man, but not like a man without hope. Those consolations he had often imparted to others, in scenes of domestic affliction, had their full effect on his own mind, and inspired him with that resignation and serenity, which all stand in need of, but which none but good men can feel in the hour of distress.

About this period, many Dissenters in Devonshire, thought it expedient to open an Academy in Exeter, for the purpose of educating young persons for the Ministry, and other learned professions, as well as for civil and commercial life.

life. In this undertaking Mr. Towgood was desired to engage as a Tutor. A house proper for the purpose was given by WILLIAM MACKWORTH PRAED, Esq; and the library belonging to the late Academy at Taunton, was removed to Exeter, for the use of the Students. This library was a valuable one in itself, and was considerably encreased by the will of Dr. HODGE, of London, who gave his books for the benefit of the institution. With these advantages the Academy was opened in the year 1760. The province assigned Mr. Towgood was, the delivering, once a week, a critical Lecture on the Scriptures; a department wherein he had scope for the exertion of all his abilities, and an opportunity of opening to his pupils his ample stores of scriptural knowledge, by which he made his learning more extensively useful. Those gentlemen who had the happiness to attend his Lectures will remember, with gratitude, his affectionate and solicitous concern for their improvement and usefulness, and especially that they might be animated with the love of truth, and clearly comprehend the genuine principles of christianity. To promote these important purposes,

poses, he permitted, encouraged, and assisted them
 to think freely and impartially upon every subject
 of natural and revealed religion, which the study
 of the scriptures would necessarily bring under their
 consideration. He did not look upon it as his
 duty to keep up strictly at all times to the charac-
 ter of the didactic teacher. His lectures were ra-
 ther the open informations of a friend, than the
 dictates of a master. He was always ready to
 enter into conversation with his pupils upon any
 points with the difficulty of which their minds
 were pressed and entangled, and had the happy
 talent not only of interesting his pupils, and of
 directing their attention to subjects of importance,
 but of explaining difficulties with simplicity and
 clearness. He checked any appearance of bigotry
 and uncharitableness, and endeavoured to correct
 them by shewing what might be said in defence of
 those principles they disliked. He had a peculiar
 vivacity of thought, and sensibility of temper
 which rendered him quickly susceptible of the
 warmest emotions upon the great subjects of reli-
 gion: this gave a pleasant unction (as the French
 term it) to his discourses, which commanded the

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attention

attention of the students, and at the same time left strong impressions upon their minds. He was, by nature, candid, undisguised, and averse to every thing dogmatical or assuming, and to whatever might betray an appearance of imposing his own sentiments and views of religious subjects; he would, therefore, in the mildest manner possible, hint to his pupils what he considered as an error in their judgment, or a fault in their conduct, and never failed to instruct them most powerfully by his own example, a method the best calculated to succeed with young persons of a liberal and ingenuous disposition.

The Gentlemen to whom the other departments were assigned, were well qualified to fill them with credit and usefulness. Under so able a direction, this academy was the means of furnishing many congregations in the West of England with useful Ministers, and of preparing many lay Students for filling important stations in society. After this institution had existed about ten years, it sustained a great loss by the death of Mr. TURNER, who read Lectures in Mathematics and Natural

natural Philosophy. Happily for the institution, Mr. THOMAS JERVIS, was chosen to succeed him, and there was a prospect of its still continuing to be a useful seminary, when Providence was pleased to deprive the West of England of the advantage derived from it in 1771, by the decease of Mr. MERIVALE, the Tutor in Divinity, whose memory will be ever endeared to me and to many others, who attended his Lectures, by the recollection of the mild dignity of his character, the fairness and perspicuity with which he treated dissonant opinions, his zeal in encouraging free enquiry, and the methods he pursued to excite in his pupils the love of christian truth and piety.

There is scarcely any period in the English history, since the Revolution, more critical than that which presented itself in the year 1768, when the great question of taxing America was in agitation. The intelligent and reflecting mind of Mr. TOWGOOD, habituated to range with freedom, and accustomed to speculate upon human rights, to regard their causes, their progression, and their effects, could not, without concern, ob-

serve the political situation of his country at that juncture. In a letter now before me, which was written in December 1768, he thus expresses himself.

“ Your sentiments on the aspect of public affairs were, alas! too just; nor have the facts, which have since intervened, brightened the prospect. New clouds arise. The affair of our Colonies is now approaching to a dangerous crisis. I pity our oppressed brethren. We celebrate Hampden and Pym, and the noble patriots of the former age, for refusing to submit to an illegal and arbitrary taxation. I have never seen nor heard the arguments urged by Lords Camden and Chatham, the Farmer of Pennsylvania, &c. attempted to be calmly and solidly answered; but by votes and resolutions in parliament, and by a naval and military force; arguments which may silence but can never convince. The contest seems now betwixt might and right; which will prevail Heaven alone knows, and it is happy for us, Heaven alone will determine.

“ My

“ My worthy Brother will not conclude from what is said above, that I think the Colonies ought not to be taxed. They undoubtedly ought: but let them tax themselves. If this were refused, (as they plead it never has been) then measures of compulsion might be properly used. But as these affairs are not only under a parliamentary, but a Divine inspection, there we will leave them: only praying that our oppressed brethren may have fortitude and discretion, to behave as becometh christians in this day of their trial. Our debt is enormous, and our taxes heavy; the Colonists, as partaking largely of that Trade and Navigation, and that Sovereignty of the Seas, which by this debt were procured, are indisputably bound to contribute as largely to its discharge.”

At the conclusion of this unfortunate war he thus writes to the same friend.

“ You seem to wonder at my entertaining any hope respecting the state of the nation. My hopes are of a moral, not political kind. “The prosperity of fools,” we are told, “destroys them.”

That

That has been undoubtedly our case. What then is the method, which a wise and merciful God takes to recover us to sanity, and rectitude of mind, in which our real happiness consists? Even that which is now taking:—to humble—to cut short—to take us down from the proud seat to which we had exalted ourselves among the nations, and to a just sense of our dependence upon that power, which alone exalts or brings low, whom we had profanely forgotten. Was not the young Prodigal a much happier man when returning in hunger, than when revelling with his harlots, and drowned in luxury and mirth? We have too long, perhaps, proudly boasted of being sovereigns of the seas, mistresses of the ocean, &c. &c. I am not sure it was not a criminal ambition, not only to claim, but even to wish or affect it. What right has any one nation to aspire after an universal empire over the seas, more than Lewis XIV. had to attempt it over the European lands? In the grand dispute between Selden and Grotius, upon *Mare liberum* et *Mare clausum*, I rather suspect my countryman was in the wrong, in claiming an exclusive right of dominion, in that part of his creation,

which

which the God of nature had left open and common to all; and that this treaty of neutrality, now negotiating amongst the maritime powers, will probably affect greatly our national grandeur and commerce; yet if it be breaking down a barrier which we unrightously set up upon what God has left common to his family of mankind, his will be done. *Fiat Justitia, ruat Cœlum.* There is a criminal as well as a laudable love of our country. To wish its elevation, upon the depression of the rights and liberties of other nations is a fordid and base passion, and yet this is the fatal patriotifm which now generally reigns (rather rages) in men's breasts."

In the beginning of the year 1771, Mr. TOWGOOD had the affliction of losing Miss MARY TOWGOOD, his eldest daughter, and a very amiable lady.

At the request of an Assembly of Ministers in Northamptonshire, he published in 1772, a judicious Abridgment of his Letters to Mr. WHITE, under the title of "a plain answer to the question, why

why are you a Dissenter?" In this pamphlet, the arguments in favour of religious Liberty, and Dissent, are brought into a compass so narrow that Protestant Dissenters (who form a considerable part of this kingdom, and are by far the largest body of Protestants in Ireland) may see the grounds of their Dissent at one view, and be the better enabled to give a rational account of their principles and conduct.

In the latter end of the year 1777, he lost his Cousin, Mr. STEPHEN TOWGOOD. This venerable Minister was succeeded in the pastoral charge by the writer of this Sketch, who although he had been some short time in the academy in which Mr. MICAJAH TOWGOOD was a tutor, was too young to be fully sensible of the extent of his knowledge, and the goodness of his heart; but from the time of their ministerial connexion, he had the freest access to his company, and the fullest opportunity of knowing and experiencing the value of his friendship. Indeed he considered it as one of the happiest circumstances in his life, to have been brought into so close a connexion with

with Mr. Towgood, who, from that period, became his assistant in study, his counsellor in difficulties, and his solace in distress, and such was the reverence with which his character inspired him, that in this respect, he may allude to the words of an Apostle, "as a Son with a Father I have served with him in the Gospel."

Notwithstanding Mr. Towgood was now far advanced in life, he took his share in the stated duties of the Sabbath, and continued to officiate till at last the infirmities of age disabled him from the more laborious part of his ministerial functions. Being no longer capable of public duty, he resigned the pastoral office in the year 1782, after more than sixty years of service in the christian church.

The two united Congregations of Dissenters in Exeter, were so highly and justly sensible of the important advantages they had derived from his Ministry, that they returned him their unanimous and affectionate thanks for all his labours among them; and, to substantiate this expression of their

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gratitude

gratitude and respect, they, at the same time, presented him with an elegant silver vase, on which was engraved the following motto :

“ In Testimony
of
Respect for the eminent
and
Faithful Service
of
The Rev: MICAIJAH TOWGOOD,
Pastor to the two United
Congregations of PROTESTANT DISSENTERS
in the
CITY of EXETER,
during the course of more than
Thirty years, This PIECE of PLATE
is most affectionately and respectfully
presented.
1782.”

This testimony of their gratitude was accompanied with a request that he would publish some of his manuscripts; and to prevent any expence to himself in complying with it, the Societies previously

viouſly enclorſed in the vaſe a ſum of money abundantly ſufficient for the purpoſe. This requeſt, ſo full of reſpect to their venerable paſtor, had it been made at an earlier period of his life, would probably have been complied with; but his own taſte, and his deference for that of the public, he felt would engage him in a taſk which his very advanced age would render irkſome. To gratify, in ſome meaſure, the wiſhes of his friends, he publiſhed an addreſs to theſe Societies on the grounds of Faith in Jeſus Chriſt; the chief deſign of which is to give a concise, and at the ſame time, comprehensive view of the leading evidences of chriſtianity; the obligations under which it lays its profeſſors, and the benefits to which it entitles them.

When the Reader of this little volume takes into conſideration all the circumſtances under which it was written, he muſt be convinced that the writer was a man of extraordinary abilities. Let him conſider that he drew up this addreſs not in the days of his youth, when, as a writer expreſſes it, the memory and imagination are in full bloom and vigour, neither in his firm and mature

age when the fruits of the understanding are ripe; but in the last period of life, in the 84th year of his age, a season when all those branches of our nobler parts are at best drooping and barren, if not entirely withered and decayed by age. Under all these disadvantages, this address is composed with so much judgment, and breathes such a spirit of piety, zeal, and concern for the best interests of his affectionate charge, as will be edifying to every reader, and cannot fail of being particularly felt by those to whom it is more immediately addressed. It is a publication which will reflect the highest honour on his head and his heart. For if the veteran soldier be held honourable, who, in an hand benumbed by time, has grasped the just sword in defence of his country; shall he be less esteemed whose trembling pen labours to the last in promoting the cause of religion and virtue?

From the time of his resigning the pastoral office, he continued to receive his friends with his wonted kindness. His fortune was sufficient to supply him with every requisite accommodation, and to enable him to assist those brethren in the
 ministry

ministry whose circumstances were straightened and necessitous. His house was always open to receive them, and he ever treated them with a warmth of affection and delicate generosity peculiar to himself. It is an observation of Dr. JOHNSON, that whoever retires from the world, the world as eagerly retires from him. This censure upon the virtue and discernment of mankind is not universally true; and Mr. TOWGOOD affords a pleasing instance, that wisdom and virtue, whether exhibited in the public scenes of life, or in retirement, will ever be courted and admired. His company was coveted by all his acquaintance, and in the years subsequent to his resignation, he was visited, not only by his particular friends, but by many strangers to his person, in whom his writings had excited the greatest respect.

In the decline of life the weaknesses, even of the greatest men, are frequent and excuseable. Bodily infirmities gradually impair the powers of the mind. Uneasy sensations, long continued, frequently sour the native sweetness of the temper, and give a forbidding austerity to the manners.

Strangers

Strangers to the feelings of youth, old men often judge even the innocent fallies of lively spirits, and a warm heart by the severest dictates of rigid prudence. Finding their judgments little attended to, by those who are addressed on all sides by a more alluring voice, they become querulous and impatient. These appearances, however disgusting, must patiently be borne with, if not from motives of humanity, yet from the recollection that the day is not far distant, when we shall stand in need of the same indulgences. But experience proves that old age, is not always attended with these infirmities. “*Ut enim non omne vinum, sic non omnis ætas vetustate coalescit*; as it is not every kind of wine, so neither is it every sort of temper, that turns sour with age.” Habitual temperance prevented Mr. Towgood from feeling many of the infirmities to which age is subject; and the religion he had inculcated dispersed the clouds, and diffused a sunshine on the evening of his life. The easiness and sweetness of his temper, are not to be described by words; of this nothing but conversation with him could convey a just idea. A
disposition

disposition so happy was become habitual, and continued with him to the last.

——— "Tho' old, he still retain'd
His manly sense and energy of soul.
Virtuous and wise he was, but not severe,
His easy presence check'd no decent joy."

ARMSTRONG.

There was every thing in his situation to make old age a state of felicity. He could look back on a long series of public service, in which he had been the honoured instrument of much good; health, and the continued use of his rational faculties enabled him to enjoy the present moment, and his future prospects were joyous and animating: the dawn of an approaching glorious immortality brightened the evening of his life, and kindled such exhilarating hopes that, when conversing on the subject of his departure, his countenance would glow with an animation so peculiar, that his friends might be tempted to think they were already conversing with an inhabitant of another world.

Writing

Writing to a highly valued friend, the Rev. Mr. WORTHINGTON of Leicester, to whom the writer of this Sketch is indebted for many valuable letters inserted in this history, he thus expresses himself.

“ When I look back and seriously review the succeeding periods of my past life, I bow down with grateful wonder, and join in the song of my dear Mr. WORTHINGTON, and say, “how many, O Lord our God have been the wonderful works thou has done for us! How precious have been thy thoughts to us ward, how great has been the sum of them!” But when we look forward and contemplate the infinitely better things, the unsearchable riches which divine goodness has laid up for us in that other world, upon which we are soon to enter, what language can express the grateful tribute we owe! We are lost---we are swallowed up in the height and depth and immensity of this grace; and can feel, as well as say, that verily God is love; and that as high as the heavens transcend the earth, so great is his mercy and compassion to us.”

Writing to the same friend, in his 82d year, he says.

“ As

“As to my own retrospective view of the long succession of years, and of services thro’ which an invifible, almighty Hand has moft graciously upheld, conducted and helped me; I bow with deep humiliation, under a fense of the innumerable weaknefses and defects which have attended my beft fervices, and am ready almoft to call them “*splendida peccata*:” but can never enough adore the goodnefs and mercy which have followed me thro’ every paff scene of this pilgrimage; and in which, I humbly hope, as to all future fcenes of my exiftence, that they will endure for ever. You little know, my dear Sir, the real weaknefs and imperfections of your diftant friend and correspondent, whom you have honoured with fo high a rank in your affection and efteem. But fovereign, almighty grace works by whom it will work; chufes weak things to confound the ftrong, and out of the mouth of babes perfecteth its own praife.”

In his 87th year, addreffing himfelf to the fame perfon, he draws a moft pleasing picture of the decline of life.

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“ I bleſs God that I can look forward to an approaching ſtate of light and peace where neither ſtrife nor debate can ever have place. Through the great favour of heaven, I feel the earthly part of my frame ſinking gently, and with little pain, to its original duſt; but far greater is the favour that the *ſelf*, the mind that inhabits this ſinking frame, can, thro’ the grace of the chriſtian covenant, look for the mercy of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt unto eternal life. Full of hope that the doctrine of the ſoul’s ſleeping ’till the reſurrection at the laſt day, is as unſcriptural as it is unjoyous, I, with humble confidence, commit my ſpirit to that Almighty Father that gave it, and to that compaſſionate Saviour who died to redeem it; hoping to meet you, my dear friend and brother, in thoſe manſions which our Lord is gone before to prepare for our reception.”

How truly venerable is old age, when attended with diſpoſitions and cheered by hopes like theſe! But let me remind the reader and myſelf, that it is by theſe habits and diſpoſitions alone, gradually acquired in *early life*, that we can hope to paſs the
concluding

concluding scenes of it with the same serenity and resignation. It is delightful to behold the corn fields in harvest, covered with corn, ripe for the sickle, but it cannot be beheld except the corn has been sown in the spring. The case is the same with the culture of the mind. Can he who has passed his life wholly in secular pursuits, in grasping riches, aspiring after preferment, in amusing himself with shew and ostentation, or in wallowing in sensuality and voluptuousness, have laid a foundation for passing a chearful old age? Nothing is more certain than that the mind remains to the last, as it has been formed in the younger part of life. The ruling passion seldom fails 'till all fails. The mind having been for 40 or 50 years bent one way, must preserve to the end the form it has received.

Those who have been so wise in their youth as to consider life in its proper light, a transient state, to be temperately enjoyed while it lasts; who have improved their minds with knowledge and enriched them with piety and virtue, are qualified for acting the concluding scene with equal propriety.

In the month of January 1791, the strength of his religious principles was severely tried by the death of his only son, MATTHEW TOWGOOD, Esq. of London, in the 60th year of his age. He was a Gentleman of distinguished public spirit and ardour of mind, and zealously engaged in various undertakings in which the advantage and honour of the Protestant Dissenters were concerned. Mr. Towgood met the trial with fortitude, and his sorrow was pious, submissive, and resigned. He knew the separation would be but very short, and that probably a few months or weeks would restore them to each other. He had the satisfaction of seeing his son pass through the various scenes of life with great credit and usefulness, and close it as became the expectant of a better world. Mr. Towgood had still the comfort of observing his descendants filling useful and important stations in life, and had a cheerful hope that there would be some in future generations, who would inherit his principles, be zealous supporters of the cause of civil and religious liberty, and pillars in the house of God, when he should be laid in the dust.

With

With a delicate constitution, and great application to literature, Mr. Towgood lived on to an extreme old age; and is one of those examples, which serve to shew that studious occupations, if accompanied with uniform temperance and moderate exercise, are not so detrimental as is generally imagined.

On the 26th of February 1791, he had a paralytic seizure, and for several days his friends hourly expected his dissolution: though to the surprize of the medical gentlemen who attended him, he gradually recovered, the oppression of his distemper was so great, that it became difficult for him to articulate. His understanding did not appear to be in the least debilitated, but preserved all its energy; the activity of his mind concealed from him much of his real weakness, and his soul continued serene, calm, and resigned to the will of God. From the time of this seizure, he was seldom able to go out of his chamber. He was still, however, glad to receive his friends, and his behaviour in this closing scene of trial was so truly exemplary, that none of them could leave his room without admiration and improvement.

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A venerable old man, who preserves to the last moments an amiable serenity and easy cheerfulness; who recalls the past without remorse, and contemplates the future without fear; such a one may still be highly useful to society. Like some flowers which shed the most fragrant perfume just at the close of the day, the example of the dying christian will leave delightful impressions on the hearts of those around him. It was not always easy for the friends of Mr. TOWGOOD to understand what he said; but what they did hear was weighty and impressive. He delighted to bear his testimony to the goodness and faithfulness of God, and spent his last days in habitual thankfulness for the consolations and hopes of the gospel. He professed his firm belief of the truth and importance of those doctrines which it had been the business of his life to explain, illustrate, and enforce, and regretted the mistaken zeal by which many of the present day are actuated, who so precipitately embrace and fondly propagate opinions which, after long and impartial enquiry, he was convinced were as unscriptural as they were uncomfortable.—But though he lamented the efforts of those who would lead others to be-

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lieve their Saviour to be a mere man, he had lived long enough not to be alarmed at what he considered as the fashionable system of the day. Like many other opinions which have had their successive days of triumph in the christian world, he doubted not but it would soon vanish and be forgotten, and that truth would finally prevail, when wearied with controversy, men will have recourse to scripture in its plain and obvious meaning as the only standard of faith. But whilst he lamented the mistakes of some of his brethren, he expressed the greatest affection and esteem for those of them who followed the convictions of conscience, however their system differed from his own, and delighted to the last in giving them the testimonies of his esteem. Interested as he was, in the integrity and success of his brethren; his attention to *their* conduct did not lead him to overlook his *own*. In the seasons of solemn recollection which the near views of another world would frequently occasion, he seriously considered, not only the principles upon which he had undertaken the ministry, but the manner in which it had been pursued, and the effects it had produced in himself, and in those
whose

whose souls had been committed to him. In this review of his conduct, and the course of his life, it afforded him great pleasure, that he had not been useless to the world, and that the blessing of God had attended his ministry. These reviving reflections supported his mind, and cheered his sinking spirits.

Mr. Towgood still continued free from the defects to which old age is usually subject. No starts of peevishness (the frequent attendants of paralytic seizures), ever ruffled his mind. In those little trials of the temper which misconception of his meaning would frequently give rise to, he was never betrayed into anger, or deprived of the perfect possession of himself. His countenance was always placid and cheerful; and his principal, his last employment on earth, was to ease and lessen the care which his friends took of him, to testify his acknowledgments, and to lead them, by his conduct, to love and respect the religion of Jesus Christ, and to honour his Creator and Father, by paying to the last breath a filial and respectful submission. Having taught
his

his friends, by his conduct in the active scenes of life, how to live, he now taught them how to die. If any thing were capable of encreasing the affection of his friends, it must have been the patience and contentment with which he supported his daily encreasing weakness. Every one was anxious to contribute something to his comfort, and his paternal care was repaid by the tender assiduities of his affectionate Daughter, who had always lived with him, and who now listened to his broken accents, to catch the least intimation of her Father's wishes, and watched with anxiety, every look to learn his wants,

“ Explore the thought, explain the asking eye,

“ And keep alive one parent from the sky.”

He experienced frequent returns of his disorder, and after continuing eleven months, in a state of great debility, he died on the 1st of February 1792, in his 92d year, leaving no good man his enemy, and attended with that sincere and extensive regret, which can follow those only who, occupying useful stations, have acquitted themselves with zeal and fidelity.

Multis ille bonis flebilis occidit,

Nulli flebilior quam mihi.

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CIRcumstances, however trifling in themselves, when connected with a character that has excited our affection and respect, derive a kind of adventitious consequence from this relation, and are sought for with more avidity, than greater matters in men of inferior ability. Should this account of Mr. TOWGOOD, ever pass beyond the circle of his personal acquaintance, perhaps some description of his exterior appearance and manners, might not be unacceptable. His person was above the middle size, and extremely slender; his eye lively and penetrating; his whole appearance venerably pleasing, so that the beholders were insensibly drawn to love, before they knew how much reason there was to admire him. To the 7th edition of his Letters to Mr. WHITE, lately published, is prefixed a neat engraving of him, from an excellent portrait by Mr. OPIE.*

His

* It was with great difficulty his friends could prevail on him to suffer his picture to be drawn. His objection was similar to that of Erasmus on the like occasion. "Ac ne facie quidem propria delectabatur, vixque extortum est amicorum precibus ut se pingi pateretur."

His manners, in public and private life, were very engaging. He ascended the pulpit with that elevation of thought and sentiment, that majestic consistency of character, which is most apt to create respect and command attention. He stood with an erect, yet modest mien, the picture of a mind firm, yet free from arrogance; with an animated, yet composed countenance, the mirror of a soul entirely awake, and at the same time collected in itself. Loud exclamation, outrageous action, violence of look or gesture were not the characters of his delivery. It was solemn, yet animated. The tone of his voice was soft and clear. He had, in early life, a little impediment in his speech, but he almost entirely conquered this defect, and was an example how much an attentive observation of such an imperfection can tend towards the cure of it. He spoke like a man full of his subject and labouring under the weight of those conceptions which its awfulness inspires. His action was the unstudied result of his inward feelings.

“ Much impressed
Himself, as conscious of his awful charge,

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And

And anxious mainly that the flock he fed,
 Should feel it too. Affectionate in look,
 And tender in address, as well becomes
 A messenger of grace to sinful men."

COWPER'S TASK.

There was one circumstance in his delivery, almost peculiar to himself, which produced a wonderful effect. He would frequently stop short, in a pause of recollected silence, as unable to vent the workings of his bosom, or cloathe them in adequate language. These strong impressions of divine truths upon his own heart, tended greatly to affect his hearers, and to render his discourses highly acceptable and useful. His discourses were, indeed, a model in the art of preaching; an art which he never prostituted to promote the designs of a party, or to kindle the flame of theological debate.—Whenever any controverted doctrine came in his way, he treated it with modesty and charity, as became one who was duly sensible of the narrow limits of human knowledge in his state of darkness and imperfection. The main scope and tenor of his preaching was practical. He led not his flock

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for nourishment, to the dry and barren hills of cold and unedifying speculation. His discourses were all calculated to convince the understanding, affect the heart, and dismiss his hearers, silent, serious, and thoughtful. Would to God, that all the Ministers of religion, like this amiable Preacher, could be induced to drop their disputes at the shrine of piety, and to sacrifice their talents, their love of popularity and profit, on the altar of public utility! The House of God was never intended for a school of speculation. It is a wretched abuse of time to bewilder our hearers in the nice distinctions of the schoolmen, in the explanation of mysteries deemed necessary to be believed now, although the Apostle Paul, divinely inspired as he was, declared, that “ he knew but in part, and could prophecy but in part.” Were the Ministers of religion to bend all the powers of their minds to the promotion of truth according to godliness, without such a pertinacious adherence to dubious questions, as have perplexed the minds of their hearers, and dishonoured the House of God;—were they more attentive to the trying the spirits of men, and leading those to whom they minister,

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into a more intimate acquaintance, with what is really passing in their breasts, instead of vague and indiscriminate harangues on human depravity, a truth which every one allows, but few duly feel ;—were the dispensers of the grace of God, more frequently and earnestly to animate their hearers unto that more pleasing employment, the holding a rational and devotional fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ ;—were they more frequently to hold up to their view the treasure contained in the gospel, for comforting the sorrowing soul, oppressed with a conviction that it has violated the laws of God, and is obnoxious to his displeasure ;—were they to shew its efficacy in healing the broken heart, supporting the dejected, calming and soothing the disappointed preserving the soul unmoved amidst the variety of distressing circumstances of human life, and raising it above the world, and beyond the reach of the king of terrors ;—were they to lead their hearers to the gates of heaven, to take in just views of its joys, and before the throne of God, to behold their Saviour preparing mansions of everlasting bliss for all those, who, by a patient continuance in well-doing,

doing, seek for glory, honour and immortality ;— the souls of their people would be more edified and built up in their most holy faith, and they would experience the most lively conviction of judgment, as well as of heart that the doctrine taught them was not of man, but of God. They would be persuaded that their shepherd was leading them “ to good pastures, to feed by the still waters,” and from time to time “ restoring their souls.” The sheep would know his voice, and would follow him whithersoever he would lead them.

In conducting the devotion of the Congregation, the prayers of Mr. Towgood breathed a spirit of rational and animated piety ; they were serious and solemn, without being mean or affected ; sublime and elevated, without any flights of enthusiasm ; cloathed in language fitted to raise the attention and interest the affections, and well expressive of that frame of mind which becomes humble supplicants, when addressing their great Creator, the supreme Majesty of Heaven and Earth. As he looked upon the scriptural style to
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be most becoming in our addresses to the Deity, so he made much use of scriptural phrases, and was peculiarly happy in the choice of those which were best adapted to the several parts of prayer. His prayers on some public occasions were written and committed to memory. Having one of these in my possession, my presenting it to the Reader will not stand in need of an apology.

A PRAYER for the 5th of NOVEMBER.

OH Thou who art the universal Parent, who hast made of one blood all nations of men to dwell upon the face of the earth! Look down with paternal pity upon the whole human race. Thou hast commanded us to pray for all men, declaring it thy will that all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. Send forth, Almighty God, thy powerful and efficacious word. Let it restore the face of nature and
create

create all things new. Thou saidst, let there be light and there was light; oh! let thy sacred word have free course thro' all the world; let it chase away all darkness, superstition, and vice, and cause the light of the knowledge of thy glorious Grace to shine brightly into the hearts of all the people upon Earth. Look down from Heaven and behold the tyranny and oppression, the superstition and error which have spread themselves over the face of the earth. Break the arm of oppressive power; stay the progress of desolating wars; cast down the strong hold of superstition and error; let Christianity shine forth in its native simplicity and beauty, to the conviction of unbelievers, and to the conversion and joy of the whole Earth.

Behold with a propitious and favourable eye, these kingdoms of Great-Britain and Ireland, and all our plantations. We give thanks to thy Divine Majesty, that, when nations around us have been made the seat of wasteful and destructive wars, and have been visited with the strokes of thine awful and tremendous rod, thy Providence spared us; that an uninterrupted course of

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favours

favours have continually followed us, and even when we have been provoking Heaven by numerous and great offences, it hath been showering down its mercies in rich profusion upon us. Almighty and ever present Jehovah! Thou rulest in Heaven by thy power, thine eyes behold the nations, neither is there any darkness where the workers of iniquity can hide themselves from thy view. We praise thee for the great and repeated deliverances wrought by thy Providence for the kingdoms to which we belong. We desire now, in an especial manner, to join our hearts and voices with those of the whole land, in celebrating the high praises of God our Deliverer, and calling upon our souls, and all that is within us to bless his holy name—that the dreadful storm which hung over our heads, thou hast mercifully dispersed, and broken the heavy chains which were intended for our necks. Thou frownedst from Heaven upon the conspiracies of our foes, and wast graciously pleased to interpose and blast their attempts. Thou hast saved us from our enemies, thou hast put them to shame who attempted the subversion of our liberties and laws.

Thine

Thine eyes beheld the dark and secret caverns in which their treasure lay concealed. Thine hand brought to light and seasonably defeated their malicious designs, and in the pit which they digged for others thou hast caused their own feet to be taken and to fall. If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, when fierce and mighty enemies rose up against us, then the proud waves had gone over our souls. But blessed be thy name who gavest not our religion, our liberties, and our rights, a prey to their teeth. Our feet are escaped from the snare of the destroyer, the snare is broken and we are escaped. We rejoice in thy goodness, oh! Almighty Preserver and Guardian of mankind, that when the foundations of our religion and liberty were shaken, and the whole frame of our government was ready to be overthrown, and our rights and possessions were falling a prey to violent men; that then Thou wast pleased to raise up a Prince to deliver and save us; that thine hand was with him, that thy winds and waves favoured him; that thou tookest away the hearts and blastedst the counsels of his and our enemies; that thou didst set him upon the throne and establish his

kingdom in spite of all opposition; and hast continued to us a succession of protestant Princes to reign over us. We bow down and adore thine invifible, almighty and moft merciful hand. Thou cafted down Kings, and thou raifeft them up. Thou filleft vacant thrones, and ruleft uncontrouled in the kingdoms of men; there is no wifdom, nor understanding, nor counfel againft the Lord. Thine, O Lord, is the glory, the victory, and the majesty. Our fouls were appointed as the fheep to the flaughter, but thou haft graciously interpoſed and fnatched us from the jaws of deſtruction and death. Now, therefore, will we enter thy Courts with thankſgiving, and thy gates with praife. We will take the cup of Salvation and call upon the name of the Lord. We magnify and extol thee with all our fouls, and our ſpirits rejoice in God our Saviour, for he that is mighty has done great things for us, and bleſſed be his name. This is the day which thy providence has ſignalized, we will be glad and rejoice therein. O that being thus delivered out of the hands of our enemies, we may ſerve and walk before thee in righteouſneſs

teousness and holiness all our days. Banish far from us all ignorance, all faction and variance; heal all unchristian animosities and divisions, and unite us in the bonds of wisdom and love, that we may yet be the happy people whose God is the Lord. Still stretch out the wing of thine indulgent providence over us. Let thy protection, O Lord, be a wall of brass round about us; crown the year with thy goodness, and let thy paths drop fatness, that there may be no complaining in our streets, and that our hearts may be filled with gladness and praise. We offer up this our sacrifice of thanksgiving to Thee, our Almighty Deliverer, in the name, and as the disciples of Jesus Christ our Lord. To him be glory for ever. Amen.

This composition will convince the Reader that its author must have cultivated the gift of prayer with great diligence.

An equal spirit of fervent, yet rational piety animated all his religious exercises, but if it was ever remarkably conspicuous, if it ever glowed with
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more than usual ardour, it was in those seasons when he was called upon to administer the Supper of our Lord. On these occasions his heart appeared deeply affected, and strongly impressed with love to God, to his Saviour, and to his flock.

But it was not only his abilities and eloquence as a Preacher, which secured him the respectful attention of his audience, and the affection of his friends. These were accompanied by an amiable temper and exemplary life. His natural powers, to those who have read his works or attended his ministry, must appear to have been good, but his moral character was truly lovely. His discourses were the transcript of his soul, and his life was the enforcement of his sermons, and the best comment on his preaching; and by these means he secured the respect and veneration of his hearers. These, and these only are the means by which the Ministers of religion can reasonably hope to obtain the good opinion of mankind. Nothing is universally popular but goodness. If we be good, we shall be respected; if we do honour to the ministry, the ministry will do honour to us. If we do not conform

form to the fashionable follies and vices of the world, we shall secure its veneration and applause. He knows little of what belongs to the ministry, who can persuade himself there is any thing but virtue which can render it respectable in itself, or useful to society. If there be reason to suppose, from a minister's conduct in life, that he does not believe the truths he delivers ; that he is not endued with the affections he recommends, and does not feel the devotion he directs, his exhortations will have no suitable effect, and the mind will revolt from his doctrines. If we entertain a suspicion of craft or dissingenuity, of a corrupt or base mind in the speaker, his eloquence loses all its beneficial effect. A Preacher who has not felt the power, and imbibed the spirit of christianity, is totally unfit to recommend it to others. Christianity is not so much a bare system of doctrines and rules as an institution of life, a discipline of the heart and its affections, a ray of light sent down from the Father of Lights to illuminate a benighted world ; he into whose mind this all irradiating light has not shone, is yet wandering in darkness, and whilst he continues in this state himself, can he enlighten others ?

With

With what energy can *he* recommend religion, who is a stranger to the exalted sentiments it inspires? How shall one whose heart was never warmed with a single spark of divine love, impart that vital flame to others? How shall *he* display the love of Christ who has never felt its constraining influence? How can he describe, with any propriety, those pious dispositions, those exercises of holy communion with God, those lineaments of the divine image formed in the soul, of which he knows nothing? How can he urge, with becoming pathos, the terrors, the hopes, the joys of the future state, who has never felt the power of the world to come! And what an awkward, embarrassed figure must a Minister, without sentiments of real religion make, when called to attend the beds of the sick and dying? In short, how can he adapt his discourses with propriety and energy, to subjects to which his heart is a stranger, or to which it is averse. "As a pastor of this character," says Massillon, "has no relish for study, prayer, or retirement, he must be a constant devotee to the affairs of this world: The more he shews himself to his people, the more useless he renders himself; for by that means

“ means he exhibits a copy of that conduct, which
 “ has a direct tendency to destroy the fruit of his
 “ ministry. For, my Brethren, what advantage
 “ can his people derive from his presence and
 “ conversation? In seeing him what do they be-
 “ hold?—Nothing which can elevate their thoughts
 “ to God, or recall to their minds the duties of
 “ religion. The presence of a pastor, who stands
 “ in the stead of Jesus Christ to his flock, is not
 “ to them an example in the affairs of heaven, but
 “ of the world. This, alas! is but the beginning
 “ of evil to such an unhappy people. The pastor
 “ I am describing, not only renders his labours in
 “ Christ’s vineyard useless, by the badness of his
 “ example, but he destroys, he lays it waste, and
 “ makes it the habitation of Demons; as if it were
 “ not enough to be of no service to his flock, he
 “ infects it, diffuses through it an odour of death;
 “ he poisons it and becomes a constant living apo-
 “ logy for vice.

“ But alas! how will he appear before God,
 “ when his example, far from edifying his people,
 “ has encreased their wanderings? How will he

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“ appear

“ appear before his judge, alone, humiliated, con-
 “ founded, invested with a sacred character which
 “ will become the most dreadful instrument of his
 “ condemnation? Or, if he be followed by the souls
 “ which had been committed to his care, they will be
 “ souls which he had neglected and even confirmed
 “ in the practice of sin by his example; souls
 “ which will demand justice on him by pleading
 “ at that awful tribunal, that if it had pleased the
 “ Lord in his mercy to send them a Pastor after
 “ his own heart, one who should at the same time
 “ have been their pattern and their guide, they
 “ would, like Tyre and Sidon, have long ago re-
 “ pented in sackcloth and ashes.”* To be like
 Barnabas, a good man, is absolutely necessary to
 being a good Minister. In other professions the
 case is different. A man may be a good lawyer,
 or a good physician, though his morals are bad;
 for the proper exercise of these employments de-
 pends chiefly on the understanding; but the suc-
 cess of a Minister must depend on the heart.
 The work of his profession, is the work of a soul

devoted

* MASSILLON DISC. SYNODAUX.

The Reader will excuse the length of this quotation from Massillon.
 As these very striking reflections never before appeared in English, I
 could not deny myself the pleasure of communicating them.

devoted to God and influenced by the spirit of holiness. Mr. Towgood was, therefore, eminently qualified for the acceptable discharge of his duty. The whole man, his soul, his heart was absorbed by his business as a Minister of the Gospel.

His public services were assisted by private devotions. He never entered the pulpit without first addressing himself to God for a blessing in his retirements. Private Prayer was always the first and last business of the day, and it was by these exercises he furnished himself with spirit and resolution to go through the active duties of his profession: this delightful intercourse with the Father of his Spirit, gave animation and zeal to his public services, and rendered them a blessing to his flock. Many, in the present age, presume to treat such exercises with contempt. Having never experienced in themselves the exalted pleasures of devotion, they have no conception of the joy it administers, and the benefits it procures. But, were not the fact too glaring, one could never suppose that a Minister of our holy religion should ever neglect so sacred a duty. If Prayer, says

the excellent Maffillon, “ be the foul of Chriflia-
 “ nity; if a chriftian who lives without prayer,
 “ lives without God, without religion, and without
 “ hope, what a monfter muft be that Minifter of
 “ this religion, an interpretor of its laws, and a
 “ public interceffor with God, if he be not a de-
 “ votional man? Without this grace, this unc-
 “ tion, he will be but founding brafs and a
 “ tinckling cymbal. His language will be as cold
 “ as barren, as infipid as his heart, and the mini-
 “ ftry of the word will be to him a forced duty for
 “ which he has no relifh, or a theatre of vanity
 “ where he will feek for the applaufe of thofe who
 “ hear him, more than their converfion and
 “ falvation.”

The life of Mr. Towgood was a devotional life. The exercife of prayer preceded and confecrated every duty, and in this exercife, the various fituations and circumftances of his people were never forgotten.

In the devotions which his family and friends were called upon to fhare, he was equally conftant
 and

and regular. This family worship he so ordered, as to have the duty over in the morning, before the family entered on the several employments of the day; and so seasonably in the evening, as that neither he himself who led, nor those who joined in devotion might be in a sleepy frame, the consequence of which would be inattention and irreverence. Such was his own practice; and he took all occasions to press it upon others. No one who duly considers the advantages which attend the discharge of this duty, can avoid regretting that it should be so much neglected, and especially by those who have a regard for religion and virtue. How pleasant is it to behold a family living in peace, regularly uniting their hearts in an act of praise to God with every returning day, and when the shadows of the evening are stretched out, recalling their thoughts from the world, by prayer to him who makes the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice. What happy effects will such a devout custom have on the minds of every member of the family! What honourable sentiments of God will it naturally introduce into the minds of children and servants. How does it tend to fix in their breasts a sense of the presence,

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perfections, and government of the Deity, to observe that the heads of families dare not engage in business, or retire to rest, without imploring his favour, protection, and blessing. While family worship has this happy tendency to produce in us and ours, just thoughts of the God of all the families upon earth, it may also advance our mutual comfort. Our united devotions will naturally unite our hearts in love; they tend to promote a spirit of tenderness and forbearance on the one part, duty and submission on the other, kindness and benevolence in all. They are calculated to make those under our care truly religious, and religion will make them whatsoever else they ought to be. It will make every one good in the several relations of life, and will secure the faithful performance of every social duty. Happy should I esteem myself, if these observations on a duty, in which Mr. Towgood was so exemplary, could avail in impressing the mind of any one of my Readers with a deeper conviction of the excellence and importance of family-prayer, and exciting greater spirit and fervency in the discharge of it.

Though

Though Mr. Towgood was thus remarkably devout, there was nothing formal, austere or forbidding in his manners. " Sanctity sat so easily, so unaffected, so gracefully upon him, that in him we beheld the very *beauty* of holiness." Strict, regular and exemplary in his piety ; he was lively, familiar and condescending in company. Cheerfully did he mix with his family and friends in the hours of relaxation, and bore his part in conversation with all the good-natured pleasantry of a virtuous heart. He possessed learning, without the pedantry and pride with which it is often accompanied, and his attention to study, never indisposed him to those smaller attentions by which the esteem and affection of mankind are greatly conciliated. It is to be regretted that men of a studious turn, do not always make the most agreeable companions.— They frequently spend in the privacies of study, that season of life in which the manners are to be " polished into elegance, and softened into ease," and when they have gained knowledge enough to be respected, have neglected the minuter acts by which they might have pleased.

Mr.

Mr. Towgood had an exquisite relish for society, and was himself a most entertaining companion. His mind was furnished with an ample store of knowledge, not only in matters connected with his profession, but in most of the subjects of liberal enquiry. He knew the civil and ecclesiastical history, both of antient and modern times, with an exactness very surprising in a man so conversant in deeper studies. He was also well acquainted with the history of arts, sciences, and manufactures. Of these he had lived long enough to see many in their infancy and maturity, he could therefore trace them from their origin, through all their various improvements, interruptions, and revolutions. His various reading, enlarged experience, retentive memory, assisted by habit and reflection, rendered him intelligent upon most subjects, and his social dispositions made him free and communicative. His conversation therefore was a school of wisdom to those who had the happiness to enjoy it, and it must have been an undiscerning company which did not receive both pleasure and improvement from it. A remarkable vivacity of thought and expression, a perpetual flow of cheerfulness

cheerfulness and good will, and a visible air of inward happiness, made his company so pleasant and instructive that it was impossible to part from him without that "uneasiness which generally succeeds all our pleasures." He had the peculiar art of leading persons to talk on those subjects which they best understood. Well acquainted with the common pursuits and occupations of mankind, he could discourse with the merchant on the interests of commerce, with the mechanic on manufactures, and with the farmer on husbandry. The facility with which he knew how to converse with persons of all descriptions, and the pleasure he had in doing it, excited the admiration of those who never talked with him before. They were charmed with his affability and condescension in thus familiarising himself with them, entering into their little concerns, and discoursing on the ordinary affairs of life. Whilst Mr. Towgood could thus usefully bear a part in any innocent and instructive discourse, he was to the utmost degree an enemy to the reigning vices of conversation, envy, satyr, and detraction. He was as unacquainted with envy as if it had been

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impossible

impossible for such a passion to enter into the human heart. His tenderness for the character of others was a distinguishing feature of his own. He guided his words, as well as regulated his actions with discretion. He exceedingly loved to praise, and never failed to observe and applaud every appearance of merit in those with whom he was acquainted; and, as his sagacity enabled him to observe, his charity prompted him to cover a multitude of faults. Conversation on moral and religious topics were the joy of his soul. On these occasions his eyes, naturally animated, sparkled with additional lustre, his features brightened, for his heart glowed. He was much delighted with the company of his brethren in the Ministry, in hearing their sentiments, and communicating his own on theological subjects, especially scripture knowledge and enquiry. Having observed instances in which young Ministers, through a fondness for novelty, and the rashness to which youth is liable, were hurried away to espouse new and fashionable opinions with great vehemence, and throw off generally received doctrines, before they had time to consider and understand them, he
would

would frequently take opportunities of warmly recommending to them modesty and caution, in forming their last judgments, on points about which wise and good men thought differently; advising them long to continue the character of enquirers, and to keep their minds open to the reception of what, upon long examination, should appear to be the truth. Thus was his conversation always "seasoned with salt so as to minister grace to the hearers, and serve for the use of edifying." From the friendly manner in which he received his brethren in the ministry, and his extensive correspondence with them, he might justly have been called the cement of love and harmony, in the friendly associations of the two Western Counties. His learning, piety, sincerity, experience, and good sense, gave him an authority and influence among his brethren, whom he always treated with affection and freedom, and from whom he always found the returns of respect and esteem. Many occasions occurred which afforded him opportunities of exerting this justly acquired influence in checking and discountenancing a divisive spirit in Ministers and in Congregations.

The pacific tendency of the following letter will shew how well qualified Mr. Towgood was for the office he undertook. The circumstances which occasioned it occurred so many years ago, and the Minister to whom it was addressed has been so long since dead, that there can be no impropriety or indelicacy in the insertion.

Rev. and Dear Sir,

“ It is not without pain that I write what may seem harsh and disagreeable to a person I so highly esteem; but your heart is too upright and too good not to admit readily a candid expostulation on any part of your conduct which may appear to be not right. And as your patronizing the unhappy faction, and helping to divide the congregation at ———, appears to me a step extremely premature, I beg leave to expostulate with freedom thereon.

“ Though the persons who engaged your presence and assistance to form the separation, gave repeated assurances of “ their acting not from personal disgust, but from a religious concern for their

own

own souls and the salvation of others," you too well know, Sir, what is in man, and are too sagacious an observer of mankind, not to have seen, how apt human passions are to mingle with and alloy the graces of the christian. What dire animosities have in every age been carried on under the fair face of religion, and how often even good men mistakingly think themselves acting from a zeal for the glory of God, and that they are doing him service, when, at the same time, the gratifying some criminal affection is the real, but secret spring from whence their actions flow. These things considered, so serious a step as the dividing a congregation, I apprehend ought by no means to have been taken till a minute and a very impartial enquiry had been made into the grounds of complaint, and a fair hearing had been given to what might be offered in either its alleviation or disproof.

The accusation brought by the disaffected against a worthy brother, you acknowledge, Sir, to be of a very high and important nature, viz. "that the great doctrines of the gospel are in danger

ger of being lost under his ministry." An accusation that deeply affects his character, his usefulness, and consequently the satisfaction and comfort of his life. But should an accusation of this nature have been received, admitted, and even a public condemnation and execution have been proceeded to 'till the accused had been heard to explain, and, if possible, to exculpate and justify himself! The accusation brought against him, for my own part, I believe to be false. The scheme of gospel preaching, which your letter judiciously but briefly states, is, I am persuaded, perfectly agreeable to his sentiments of things; and that the grace of the new covenant, the meritorious death of Jesus, and the operations of the spirit are articles of inestimable value in his faith, and therefore, I think, must be the frequent and delightful topics of his public discourses. Should this really be the case, (as I verily believe it is) have you not, dear Sir, proceeded a great deal too severely, and even injuriously with your accused brother. Doth any, much less the christian law, "judge any man before it hear him, and know what he doeth?" But without hearing, without one previous enquiry

or

or admonition of your accused brother, judgment has been pronounced upon him, as one under whose "Ministry the great doctrines of the gospel are in danger of being lost." Thus he stands impeached and condemned before the public (for a fact of this nature sounds far and wide, and both draws the attention and opens the mouths of multitudes around) by a congregation being set up in declared opposition to him. Thus his people are encouraged, if not invited and solicited to desert him; and all neighbouring congregations are alarmed to a sense of danger, and filled with unhappy prejudices when he is called occasionally to officiate amongst them. Must not, this Sir, be a wounding him in a most tender part? Can words express the train of painful anxieties, of jealousies and disquietudes, it must naturally occasion in a sensible mind? Would the being violently deprived of silver or gold, to a generous and pious spirit, be half so afflictive as to have so grievous an imputation, such a mark of avoidance publicly fixed on him? How sensibly should you, or I, Sir, feel the sting of such a trouble! I pray God it may never be our lot.

"As

“As to the decay of vital religion, and the importance and necessity of a serious, lively preaching the great distinguishing doctrines of christianity, I entirely agree with you. May God revive it by a more abundant effusion of his spirit upon us all. The works of Flavel, Allen, Baxter, &c. breathe a spirit of serious exalted piety, which I wish to see more imbibed, and more extensively spread, especially in the rising generation. But permit me to observe, that the grand principle on which alone Nonconformity, and even Protestantism is founded, and on which alone it can stand, and all rational, and vital, and real religion with it is, that the scriptures are a sufficient and perfect rule of faith and manners; and that the kingdom of God, or the whole of vital religion consists in righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. That we may both be the happy instruments of promoting greatly this kingdom, wishes with much sincerity,

“Rev. and Dear Sir,

“Your affectionate brother,

“MIC. TOWGOOD.”

He

He had an exalted idea of friendship, and an heart formed for relishing its noblest pleasures. By his character and conduct in life, he acquired several valuable friends, whose esteem and affection gave him a delightful foretaste of the happiness of the heavenly world ; and no one could be happier in expressing the kind sentiments with which his heart overflowed wherever he professed attachment. To a Friend, with whom he had corresponded nearly 30 years, without ever having seen him, he thus wrote in the year 1767.

“ The effusions of warm friendship which your letter contains, are received into an heart as warm with affection, and big with esteem, and perhaps a little tinctured with pride of having acquired so cordial, though so distant a friend. If the beggarly and low elements of paper and ink can open a delightful intercourse between souls, tuned to union, however distant on earth, with what pleasure will they meet in the realms of perfect bliss, which our Friend is gone before to prepare for their reception, where all virtuous and good spirits will be gathered together in one.

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“ These

“ These happy realms are peopling fast, we see, from this colony of our earth. The Doctors CHANDLER and MAYHEW are gone up since my last, to receive the recompence of their faithful labours; both men of great abilities and importance in their respective stations. But though their leaves drop, the tree remains and will flourish with unfading vigour, till it spread its immortalizing fruit thro’ every region under heaven.

“ That peace which passeth all understanding, which was our Lord’s last legacy to his faithful disciples, be ever the portion and inheritance of my dear friend, and of his affectionate

“ MIC. TOWGOOD.”

In the year 1774, he thus writes to the same correspondent.

“ Let there be no compliments between Mr. W. and his distant friend, distant, indeed in body, not in mind. If the mind be the person, I am no stranger to your person, I know it, I have seen it, I have frequently conversed with you, and embraced you with great warmth and cordiality; and
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when this body shall be shortly dropt, congenial spirits, by a law of spiritual gravitation, will (as we have reason to believe) be drawn, not only to their Creator, but to minds of the same temper and complexion with themselves; and go to their own company, as well as to their own place; and be made happy in this union, or be "made perfect in one." Let us wait for this salvation; and thank God we are but sojourners in this world, of which Satan is still so much the Prince, and in the best of whose governments, falsehood, and fraud, and violence, and tyranny, have still so great a sway."

In these Letters the Reader will perceive the true spirit of friendship. He was the refuge of his friends, for advice and assistance, in all cases of perplexity and distress. The ardour of his affection for *them* got the better of a natural reluctance he had to ask favours, which no regard for his *own* interest could ever overcome. His kind offices were far from being confined to the circle of his particular friends and relations; his heart overflowed with good will to all around him, and

prompted him to embrace every opportunity of doing kind and obliging things.

If it be suspected, by some who knew him not, that, as most of his publications were of a controversial kind, they would naturally imbitter his mind and give an asperity to his temper; the thorough knowledge I had of this truly christian Divine, enables me to say that in him they produced neither of these effects.

It is greatly to be regretted that controversy is frequently carried on with an insolence, acrimony, and dogmatic spirit, highly offensive to politeness, and even common decency, and particularly reprehensible in the clerical order. Such a temper is very unbecoming those who are engaged in supporting and defending the cause of religious truth, and has a very fatal tendency; for by this means, the dispute becomes a trial of skill, and the passions and prejudices of the combatants spread a cloud over the question, in which truth and charity vanish together. But let the odium of these reflections rest on those who engage in controversy from party motives.

motives. Far different were the views which induced our amiable author to write on such subjects. He engaged in controversy not from inclination, but because he was persuaded some positions and sentiments advanced by his opponents, had an unfavourable aspect towards the glorious cause of religious liberty, a cause nearly connected with, and of great importance to the interests of truth, and the present and future happiness of mankind. When he appeared in the character of a polemical writer, he maintained his opinions with that vivacity and spirit, which are necessary to preserve the continued attention of his readers, but conducted himself with modesty and candour towards his opponents, as men, who though they might be in the wrong, were yet honest and deserving of esteem. His mind was of too liberal a cast to be enslaved by prejudice, or to think that all honesty, truth and good sense were confined to one party, and shut up in the narrow enclosure of any single denomination of christians whatever.— Just views of human nature led him to reflect on all the variety of circumstances, which might prevail on honest minds, to receive opinions widely different

different from those which he himself had espoused, and consequently inclined him to make the most liberal allowances for the infirmities of mankind, and to judge charitably of the honesty and sincerity of those, whose opinions, on some subjects, he thought it his duty to examine and expose. Controversy conducted with this spirit, exercises the abilities and improves the rational faculties, frees the mind from prejudice, makes way for a favourable opinion of those who oppose our sentiments, and lays a sure foundation for extensive charity and love to all our fellow-creatures.

These were the effects produced in the mind of our benevolent Author. Though he thought his own opinions supported by strong scripture evidence, and of great importance, he knew how to esteem and praise those who did not embrace the same sentiments, and even those who condemned them. In a letter now before me, he thus speaks of the Methodists.

“ That religious ferment called Methodism, which for the last 20 or 30 years hath been working
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ing in this nation, (though it has been attended with many shameful mixtures of human weakness, and fallies of false zeal) has, I hope, been productive of some good, and when time has a little cooled down its intemperate heat, will produce much more. It has certainly roused multitudes to some serious concern about their souls, and a future state, who before were quite thoughtless of these things ; and has had an happy and lasting effect upon the lives of numbers of the lower classes of mankind.—As for the doctrines they preach ; the followers of Mr. WESLEY are no Calvinists, and as for those of Mr. WHITFIELD, who are, they preach but the same doctrines which our forefathers, the good Puritans preached. They are therefore entitled to our candour, and though they have more dark and contracted notions of the glorious scheme of redemption than (through the mercy of heaven) we have obtained ; yet, as long as their conversation is sober and righteous as becometh the Gospel, let them go on in God's name, trusting, that wherein soever they err, God, in his time, will discover it to them."

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Mr. Towgood suffered no difference of sentiment to diminish his sensibility to virtue, or his admiration of genius. His religious opinions were as opposite to those of Dr. Priestley, as to those of Mr. Whitfield and Mr. Wesley ; but this did not prevent his entertaining a very high opinion of his abilities and integrity, as will appear from the following letter, written about the year 1779.

—— “ I had never before the pleasure of seeing Dr. Priestley, and am glad to see a head filled with so much knowledge, connected with a heart adorned with such apparent modesty and benevolence. From his apparent modesty one would not suspect him to be so bold an adventurer in the polemic parts of divinity. As to the materiality of the soul, its sleep between Death and the Resurrection, the pre-existence of the logos, the liberty of moral agents, &c. I totally differ from him. He is rather too bold a partizan in the republic of literature, and though we must allow a little eccentricity to so uncommon a genius, yet I wish he may not lessen the usefulness of his publications,

lications by launching too far into the regions of paradox and mysticism. But whereunto we have attained, let us mind the one grand point of a righteous and a holy life, trusting, that in all doubtful speculations, God will in the proper time lead us into all useful and necessary truth.

“ To his all pervading spirit of light and love, joy and peace, I most devoutly commend my dear Brother, and all his, myself, and all mine, waiting for those times of refreshing which God has spoken of by all his holy prophets.”

Such was the candid and liberal spirit of this truly excellent man. His life was distinguished by a remarkable sweetness of disposition, and every amiable virtue which adorns the domestic and social character. These dispositions and virtues were united to great elegance of mind. Seldom has the world seen the characters of the gentleman, the scholar, and the christian so happily blended. His politeness was not the result of a studied attention to forms, but the natural effect of true religion, which gave an engaging delicacy

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to his manners, and produced all those attractive graces which can be acquired by no other means. Rules of exterior imitation may be delineated with the elegant pencil of a Chesterfield; but genuine unaffected politeness can only proceed from purity of heart. Where this foundation is wanting, every art of pleasing is but the thin superficial covering of deformity, and deserves no higher appellation than that of a hollow complaisance or mean servility, to which the most unpolished manners of unaffected sincerity are infinitely preferable.* If to this natural politeness are added the habits acquired in good company, and an acquaintance with men and manners, no other requisite will be wanting to perfect the art of pleasing. These qualities Mr. Towgood possessed in a very high degree, by which he did honour, not only to the denomination of christians with which he was particularly connected, but to human nature. Such qualities may be more freely insisted on when they do occur, because, those who are best acquainted with mankind, know well they occur but very rarely.

His

* “ Multoque melius est e duobus perfectis, rusticitatem habere sanctam, quam eloquentiam peccatricem.”

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His learning was solid, judicious, and extensive. His taste in what is termed polite literature, was correct and elegant. The study of the English language he regarded as a matter of so much consequence, that he took great pains, and paid great attention to the style of his compositions. His knowledge of the languages of Greece and Rome, was sufficient to give him an easy access to their best writings, by which he acquired a just taste in composition. But his general application was to those more serious and important parts of study that were immediately suited to his profession. He was well acquainted with every part of Theology, and diligently studied the holy Scriptures.

As he began life on the footing of free and impartial enquiry, he pursued the same steps to the end, never thinking himself too old to learn, or so wise as not to desire to be wiser. A proof of this openness of mind, and desire of information, I have now before me, in a letter I received from him 4 or 5 years before he died, in which, after some sensible observations on the controversy between Dr. HORSLEY and Dr. PRIESTLEY, he

thus concludes. "I shall be glad to see any future publications of theirs, for when there is a collision of two such great bodies in the ecclesiastical hemisphere, it is to be hoped some beam of light will be struck out to guide us in the way of truth."

The Reader will naturally expect some account of the religious principles embraced by so diligent, impartial, and persevering an enquirer after truth. These principles, however, are so fairly and honestly avowed, and held up to the public view in his Address to the Congregations, on his resigning the pastoral charge, that little more is necessary than to refer the Reader to that publication.

What are the doctrines of the New Testament with regard to the Person and Pre-existence of Jesus Christ, is the great controversy of the day, a controversy warmly agitated, and not likely to be brought to a speedy conclusion. The power of clearing up all the difficulties which occur on this subject, will, perhaps, be vainly expected, till the mental fight shall be purged with that heavenly

venly "Euphrasy," with which the Angel in MILTON removed the film from the eyes of Adam, when he shewed him in vision the fate of his descendants. To enter into the field of controversy, is not suitable to my design or my inclinations. All that the Reader will expect from me, is to state to him the opinions of Mr. TOWGOOD on this and other subjects of religious enquiry.

Mr. TOWGOOD, in early life, embraced the generally received doctrine of the Trinity. He afterwards became dissatisfied with the explanations which were given of it, but without ever approaching to Socinianism, which he thought obscured in a great degree the glories of the Gospel, and enervated the force and authority of its precepts. The Pre-existence of our Saviour he considered as one of the most evident, and most delightful doctrines of the New Testament. He conceived of Jesus Christ as the very first Being whom the power of the Father called into existence, or, as styled by St. John, "the beginning of the creation of God," by whom he afterwards made the worlds, and frequently appeared under the Jewish dispensations.

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He thought there was ample reason to believe that Jesus Christ was the person that acted in the Schechinah, as the representative of the invifible Jehovah ; becaufe the very fame things are faid of him in the writings of the New Testament, which were fpoken in the Old Testament of the perfon who appeared in the Schechinah.

In thefe sentiments he agreed with fome of the wifeft and beft men the world has ever produced, and, being the refult of long and ferious investigation, founded on conviction, they were permanent, and continued to the laft moments of life.

By a letter written when he was advanced to his 87th year, it will appear, that he had neither altered his opinions on this fubject, nor was lefs able to defend them.

— “ The argument with which Dr. PRIESTLEY preffes the Jews (in his letter, p. 13,) from the Parable of the Master of the Vineyard, Matt. 21, 23, if followed into all its juft confequences, concludes moft ftrongly againft the notion of the
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mere humanity ; for the very structure, and beauty, and force of the Parable most plainly represents the *Son* to be a person of superior rank and dignity and birth to the servants, (the prophets) who were before sent ; else why should the Father say, *they will reverence my Son* ; or why did the villains say, *this is the heir, come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours* ? But this Parable bears yet harder against the Doctor, for he owns that the 70 years captivity of the Jewish Fathers in Babylon, was the punishment inflicted for, and fully expiated their crime in killing the prophets : we demand whence is it, then, that 1700 years of much sorer, and more dreadful captivity has not yet expiated the crime of killing the *Son* ? Whence ? but because the Son was a person of incomparably superior rank and birth than any of the ancient prophets ; Moses (the greatest of them all) acting but as a servant in the House of God, but Christ as a Son over his own House."

From conceiving thus highly of the pre-existent glory of our Saviour, of his character, and his present spiritual dominion, as being constituted
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king and heir of all things, he concluded him to be a proper object of worship. The objections to the worship of Christ he considered as only a dispute about words. Worship is an ambiguous term, consisting in the exertion of certain *internal* affections, and in the performance of several *external* acts correspondent to such affections. Every intelligent Being in the universe hath a respect and honour due to him, in proportion to his real worth and character, from every other intelligent Being that is acquainted with him, and no one, who is not very weak and superstitious, would think of omitting a proper honour and respect which is due to another, merely for fear of idolatry. For no being can be guilty of idolatry, by asking favours of any person, either human or divine, who has a power and right to dispense them as he pleases, because, wherever there is a right to benefit and assist, thither common sense teaches us to direct our addresses. Nor can there be any idolatry in returning thanks to that Being from whom we have received a benefit; so that when we talk of the idolatry of worshipping more than one person, we must consider what *kind* of respect

respect and deference we mean to include in the word.

Both the internal affections of love, fear, trust, &c. and the performance of the external acts, expressive of these affections, prayer, thanksgiving, bowing the knee, &c. may be paid to Princes and superior Friends, for such reasons as apply to them. This is termed *civil* worship.

They may be paid to the Mediator, for reasons peculiar to him: This is termed *mediatorial* worship. They must be paid to God, for reasons peculiar to him; and this is properly *divine* worship.

The acts of the mind are the same in each; and the different reasons which engage us to the exercise of such affections, constitute their proper difference. Mr. Towgood thought it was because persons overlooked these different senses of the same word, when applied to different objects, that so many objections had been started to the worship of Jesus Christ. But as the scripture, in no instance, expressly required that Christ should

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be addressed in prayer, and as many of the society with which Mr. Towgood was connected, considered all worship of Christ as improper, though he himself thought it defensible, he did not think it a duty, and very seldom, if ever, practised it in public, considering it as an obligation to conduct the religious addresses of a mixt society, in such a manner, as would be conformable to the sentiments of all his fellow worshippers. It is sincerely to be regretted that this mode of conducting public worship is not more generally adopted.—some persons are fond of introducing into their prayers, their own particular notions about the fall of Adam, and its consequences, with other points of doubtful and contested speculations; whilst others are equally forward to express in their addresses to the Deity, their particular opinions concerning the person of Christ, and his transactions. How contrary is it to the apostolical rule, thus to offer petitions, or make declarations in social prayer, to which a sincere christian cannot assent, and concerning which he has doubts and scruples? A minister, in his public prayers, is to offer up common requests and praises, the unfeigned devo-

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tions of the Assembly. In his private capacity, and in the retirement of the closet, the case is different. Accordingly Mr. Towgood, in his private and family worship, felt himself under less restraint, and would frequently give way to the emotions of gratitude to his Saviour, in devotional addresses to him.

Whether the death of Christ should be considered as a proper propitiation for the sins of mankind is, also, a question which has long been canvassed by our ablest critics and commentators, and occasioned great diversity of opinion. No doctrine of scripture, perhaps, has been so much corrupted, or so entirely perverted from the excellent purposes which it is adapted to answer. And hence the enemies of christianity have taken occasion to advance such objections to it as can no otherwise be answered than by referring to the absolutely pure and unsophisticated sense of scripture. Many of the expressions which have been unguardedly used by those that have most strenuously written in defence of this article of faith, are entirely of a human invention. “Never

“ doth the New Testament speak of the sacrifice
 “ of Christ as an infinite satisfaction for sinners,
 “ or as the full payment of a debt, the debt of
 “ iniquity; for where a debt is fully paid by the
 “ debtor in person, or by proxy, it cannot be said
 “ to be remitted or forgiven. No man in his
 “ senses talks of a debt being forgiven, when full
 “ payment has been made. Where justice is left
 “ without a claim, there is no room for the exer-
 “ cise of mercy. Neither can the Father be
 “ strictly said to punish the Son. For according
 “ to an antient maxim, punishment follows guilt,
 “ but the Son of God was holy, harmless, unde-
 “ filed, &c. and therefore his sufferings cannot
 “ with any propriety be stiled punishment.”*
 Nor will the representations which the scriptures
 give us of the perfections of God, permit us to
 suppose the design of the death of Christ, was to
 make God merciful, or dispose him to pardon us.
 “ The sufferings of the Mediator,” says Mr. Tow-
 GOOD,† “ we are always to consider, not as the

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* The above quotation is from the truly rational and excellent “ Dis-
 courses on various Subjects, evangelical and practical, of the Rev.
 HUGH WORTHINGTON, of Leicester.

† TOWGOOD’S Grounds of Faith, p. 31.

" primary and moving cause of God's being pro-
 " pitious to us, and willing to be reconciled, but
 " as the manner or the medium in which he
 " was pleased to shew himself propitious. Ante-
 " cedent to the death of Christ, he was gracious
 " and merciful, and ready to forgive. " For God
 " so loved the world that he gave his only begotten
 " Son ;" but, for infinitely wise reasons, fully known
 " only to himself, some of which we clearly see, he
 " chose to dispense his pardons only by the hands,
 " and reward of meritorious sufferings of one of the
 " as human race, that " as by man came death, so
 " by man also came the resurrection of the dead."
 " The pure love of God to a sinful world was the first
 " mover, and original spring of the whole plan of
 " our redemption." The death of Christ was, in his
 view of it, a standing memorial of God's being pro-
 pitious, a memorial coinciding with the almost uni-
 versal sentiment and practice of the world, among
 whom sacrifices were esteemed as an essential part
 of religion. " The institution of sacrifices," ac-
 cording to Dr. SHAW, " in the original design of
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them, was intended, in dumb, but significant show, to represent the death which the offerer deserved as the punishment of his sin, and at the same time to encourage his hope of the pardon of it, and by these means to work his soul into a habit of devotion, and the firmest resolution of future reformation.*” And such appears to have been the design of the sacrifice of Christ. It was not a matter of necessity, which unrelenting justice required as an oblation, but a wise expedient to support moral government, to display the evil and demerit of sin, and consequently to be a perpetual incentive to humility and repentance.

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* “Some have endeavoured to explain the efficacy of what Christ has done and suffered for us, beyond what the scripture has authorised. Others, probably, because they could not explain it, have been for taking it away, and confining his office, as Redeemer of the world, to his instruction, example, and government of the church, whereas the doctrine of the gospel appears to be, not only that he taught the efficacy of repentance; but rendered it of the efficacy which it is, by what he did and suffered for us, that he obtained for us the benefit of having our repentance accepted to eternal life, &c. How and in what particular way it had this efficacy, there are not wanting persons who have endeavoured to explain; but I do not find that the scriptures have explained it. It is our wisdom thankfully to accept the benefit without disputing how it was procured. Let reason be kept to, and if any part of the scripture account of the redemption of the world by Christ, can be shewn to be really

I have dwelt thus largely on the opinions formed by Mr. Towgood, on these controverted doctrines, because they have been represented as unscriptural and absurd; and injurious reflections have been sometimes cast on those who have embraced them. It is true, every man should judge for himself, and not be determined by the opinions of others, however highly he may esteem them. But it is apt to give us some uneasiness when we see persons of genius and learning, so widely differing from us, and representing our opinions in an unfavourable light. It is some defence against this to meet with other men, of equal understanding and integrity, entertaining the same sentiments with ourselves.

We freely acknowledge the abilities of many who oppose these doctrines; but we see no reason for thinking that Socinians in general, have possessed advantages which have not been enjoyed by others,

really contrary to it, let scripture, in the name of God, be given up. But let not such poor creatures as we go on objecting to an infinite scheme, that we do not see the necessity or usefulness of all its parts, and call this reasoning."

BISHOP BUTLER'S ANALOGY, Part II.

others, or that there are not many believers in the Pre-existence and Propitiation of Christ, who may be safely placed in competition with any who have appeared on the opposite side. When we see such men as Dr. PRICE and Mr. TOWGOOD, receiving those doctrines, after long and dispassionate enquiry, we are in some measure guarded against the strong assertions of others, are encouraged to think they are not so manifestly repugnant to reason, as they apprehend them to be, and are led to hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering.

Although Mr. TOWGOOD believed the doctrine of the Atonement, or Reconciliation, as thus explained, he did not conceive of it as having any connection with the doctrine of Original Sin. It is the opinion of those who believe this latter doctrine, that our first parent Adam, was the representative of all his posterity; so that when he sinned, we all sinned, and every sin being an offence against an infinite God, we all became from that moment liable to an infinite punishment, even the everlasting wrath and curse of our Maker. Mr.

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Towgood, in a letter to a person who wished to have his opinion on the subject, speaks of this doctrine as “ drawing a veil over the glory of the Divine goodness, eclipsing greatly its lustre, and making him not only like, but even worse than such a one as ourselves. To suppose the Deity to be angry, even to wrath, with a new-born infant, and rendering it liable to everlasting damnation, for what it never did, and never possibly could do, nor could possibly help ; not only charging it with, but dreadfully punishing upon it, a crime which was committed 5000 years before it came into being ; and imputing to it a fault of which it never was, nor could be guilty—what an impeachment must it be of the wisdom, justice, goodness, and mercy of the blessed Father of mankind ! and with what horrors would you look upon that Father amongst men, who could ever do the like, and become an imitator of God, as becomes his dear children ?

“ This notion, my dear Friend, is so big with absurdity, not to say impiety, that I imagine there is no serious sincere christian that ever did or can

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embrace it, without some secret check and remonstrance of that conscience, which is the candle of the Lord within him; and without frequent and strong doubts and disbelief of its truth.

“ The same may be said of another part of this scheme, viz. that God, having made Adam, constituted him a federal head and representative of mankind; so that if he remained innocent, all the numberless millions who were to descend from him should be born holy and happy, and fixed in a state of everlasting felicity; but if he sinned and disobeyed the law his Creator had given him, all the millions who came from him should be born in a state of guilt, pollution, and wrath, liable to the everlasting pains and damnation of hell.

“ This is a doctrine of such immense importance both to the honour of God, and to the happiness of men; is so totally repugnant to all those natural ideas of wisdom, justice, and goodness, which the finger of God hath written upon the table of every man’s heart, that unless it was most clearly and expressly revealed in scripture,
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the man that thought justly upon the perfections of the Deity could not possibly admit of. For let me beseech you to consider, Adam, in his state of innocence and primitive rectitude, was really a weak, frail and fallible creature, for such the event remarkably proves him to have been. What corruption or moral impotence his fall hath brought upon his descendants, I do not pretend to know, because the scripture hath no where, that I find, revealed it. All the texts you quote about the wickedness of men, many hundred years afterwards are quite wide of the point. This only I know, and I devoutly thank God, and rejoice in the knowledge of it; that whatever damage or loss human nature sustained by the transgression of the first Adam, is abundantly repaired, and more than repaired, by the second Adam. This is what the Apostle Paul delightfully expatiates upon, and holds up to view in various lights for our joy and our hope.* I beseech you, dear Sir, consider seriously and closely this most comfortable and important doctrine, which our Lord hath here taught us by his Apostle; and you will here find (as Mr.

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ROM. v. 12. to the end. And also 1. CORINTH. xv. 21. 22.

BAXTER expresses it) that the plaister is wider than the sore, and that where the sin of the first Adam abounded to bring pain and death upon mankind, the grace of the second hath much more abounded to bring happiness and life.

“ You refer me to the proneness of children to perverseness, and of grown men to wickedness, as a proof of the extreme corruption of our nature. But tell me, my dear friend, did you ever see, in any child, or in any man, in the course of your life, so great a proneness to transgress the law of God, as you see in Adam, even in his primitive, uncorrupted and innocent state? Consider seriously the case. He was just come from the hand of God, fresh into being, with the Divine image stamped upon him; his reason clear; his judgment sound; his conscience upright; all his appetites and passions put in due subjection to the higher powers of his mind. He beheld this beautiful world filled with an infinite variety of animals and plants, all made for his use, and given into his hands. He beheld moreover a delicious garden, planted by God himself, stored with a rich abundance of flowers
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and fruits, and every thing proper to delight and regale him, and had but *one single tree* of which he was forbidden to eat, as a test of his obedience and gratitude to his Creator. This now was the state of Adam. But behold! so strong was his appetite, and so violent his passion, and so careless his attention in this primitive, uncorrupted state, that, allured by the pleasing aspect of the fruit, and impelled by a strong desire of being more knowing than his all-wise Creator thought fit he should then be, he presumptuously broke through all these powerful bonds, by which duty, interest, gratitude, love, and fear, had bound him to obedience. He indulged his lawless appetite, in defiance of all these many and mighty obligations; and knowingly, wilfully, deliberately sinned.

“ We always judge, you know, of the strength of a thing, by the force it bears down, or the resistance it overcomes; how great, then, must be the strength of the animal appetites and passions in the original frame of Adam, which were effectual to overpower all these mighty obligations, and
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to burst all the sacred ties by which God had bound him to obedience to his command.

“ What now shall we say ? That it was owing to any corruption and depravity in his *nature*. Undoubtedly no. If then this great, this heinous, this deliberate sin of Adam was no proof or indication of any *original* corruption or depravity of *his* nature ; why should the perverseness we now see in children, or the wickedness in men, be alledged as a proof of such corruption in theirs.

“ It hence, I think, appears evident beyond doubt, that Adam, even in the original constitution of his nature, had, as well as we, a law in his members, which warred with great violence against the law in his mind ; that he had strong appetites and passions planted by the hand of God into his animal frame, as a test of his obedience, as a subject for his moral discipline, for the exercise, the proof and improvement of his virtue, as they are in ours, though probably none of his descendants have the same power over them, or ability to controul and keep them in subjection,

jection, which our first parents had. The proofs you bring from scripture, that we are all born in the wrath of God, and deserving of damnation, are by no means sufficient. To Psalm 51. 5, "I was shapen in iniquity," it is sufficient only to ask, who was it that shaped and fashioned David in the womb? Let him answer—119 Psalm 73, "Thy hands have made me and fashioned me." 139 Psalm, 13. "Thou has possessed my reins, thou hast covered me in my mother's womb," &c. 100 Psalm, 3, "It is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves." Now if it be God that made, that shaped, that fashioned him in the womb, and he was then and there shaped in iniquity, to whom must that iniquity be manifestly ascribed? Must it not be to God? But this being impossible, we must suppose that David, by a common figure, put the cause for the effect—that he spoke of the sufferings which sin occasioned, under the denomination of sin,* and that the expression related to that first sentence upon the woman. Gen. III 16. "I will greatly multiply thy sorrow, and thy (or in thy) conception, in sorrow shalt thou bring forth children."

* See similar figures in GEN. xix. 15. 1 SAM. xxviii. 10. ISA. 53. 6. 1 PET. II. 25. 2 COR. v. 21.

dren." If you take this expression of David in your literal and strict sense, then marriage is no longer honourable, no nor even innocent, in all. Celibacy is a duty, and you must blot from your bible that blessing and command of God "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth."

"As to the other text Ephes. II. 3. "Were by nature children of wrath even as others." By children is not meant children in years, or the state in which they were born; but the course, or habit, or moral character which by practice they had acquired. Thus we read of children of light, children of darkness—of disobedience—of Belial—of the bridegroom—of the resurrection. Children of wrath may here signify, either wrathful, angry, furious, revengeful persons, or else persons whose habits of vice had exposed them to the wrath of God, and made them liable to some awful visitations from heaven.

"Thus far I had written when the book which I have herewith sent, came to my hands.* I have

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* Dr. WHITBY on the Five Points,

not read it for near 40 years. As you signified your wish to see any book which treated on these subjects, I pray the great Father of Spirits, that, divested of all prejudice, you may attend calmly to what it offers, to enlarge your ideas of his benevolence to mankind; that the spirit of wisdom and illumination may assist and direct your serious searches after truth; that you may be able to comprehend, or at least more clearly to discern, what are the glorious heights, and depths, and lengths, and breadths, and the exceeding riches of his grace, and goodwill to the human race, in the great plan of our redemption, by Jesus Christ our Lord; and that the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, may be your guide, consolation and portion in the present world, and your everlasting joy and felicity in that on which you are soon to enter, is the earnest wish, and hearty prayer of, dear Sir,

“ Your affectionate, &c.

“ MICAJAH TOWGOOD.”

Exeter, Oct. 26, 1772.

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Mr.

Mr. Towgood was a firm believer in the doctrine of the Millenium, or that there would be a glorious state of the church after the fall of Antichrist, and the subsequent conversion of the Jews to the christian faith, in which it should flourish in peace, righteousness, and a pious offspring, for a thousand years, under the undisturbed government of Jesus Christ, over both Jews and Gentiles, who were to be united in one church.

This doctrine has the countenance of some of the greatest men among the Christian Fathers, from Justin Martyr and Origen, down to Lactantius, the preceptor to the son of Constantine. It fell into disgrace in the days of Pope Demasus, about the year 370, on account of the carnal conceits which some men entertained concerning it, and so strongly was the doctrine objected to by many, that the authority of the whole book of Revelations, which is supposed to contain it, has been called in question. But whatever ground there may be for the doctrine of the Millenium in this Book, Sir ISAAC NEWTON observes, " I do not find

find any other Book of the New Testament so strongly attested, or commented upon so early, as this of the Apocalypse."

In later times, this doctrine has been revived and purified from sensual ideas, and there seems nothing in it, as it is now believed, contrary to scripture, and the analogy of faith. Many learned men in the Establishment, and among the Dissenters, have stated and defended it, so as to free it from every objection on account of its being inconsistent with the pure morality of Jesus Christ.

Such were the religious opinions formed by Mr. Towgood, on points which have long divided the christian world. On such complicated questions men will always differ in opinion; but conscious each of the weakness of his own understanding, and sensible of the bias which the strongest minds are apt to receive from thinking long in the same track, they ought to differ with moderation and charity. It is, undoubtedly, the duty of every man, after divesting himself as much as possible of prejudice, to investigate these sub-

jects with accuracy, and to adhere to that side of each disputed question, which, after such investigation, appears to him to be the truth ; but he transgresses the favourite precepts of his Divine Master, when he casts injurious reflections on those, who, with equal sincerity, may view the subject in a different light.—To use the words of Mr. Towgood himself, in a paper now in my hands, “ It seems never to have been the design of the great Author of our Nature, or the Founder of our Religion, that there should be amongst christians a sameness of judgment, or an unity of opinion in all, even of those things, which are apparently of great moment and importance in religion.

“ Had it been the intention of Heaven, that we should have all seen them in the same light, they would, doubtless, have been revealed with such clearness and precision, as that no sincere enquirer could possibly have mistaken them ; and that no diversity of opinion amongst the followers of Christ should ever have taken place.

“ But

“ But where then would have been the opportunity for the display of that candour and confession, that meekness and self-conquest, that mutual forbearance, humility and charity, which are some of the brightest ornaments, and even glories of the christian character, and which are of infinitely greater value, to recommend us to the Divine favour, than any rightness of opinion, and orthodoxy of sentiment, in many, which have been thought, and which really are, great doctrines of revelation.

“ It ought greatly to abate men’s zeal about doctrinal points; much more about the ritual parts of religion; and to teach us to bear with each others ignorance, and mistaken apprehensions, in points of really great importance, to remember, that even the Apostles of our Lord themselves, who were the great founders of the christian church, and who were to open to mankind the gospel scheme of salvation; that even they, for nearly seven years after the Holy Spirit was poured down upon them in that amazing manner at Pentecost, (when they spake with tongues, raised the dead, wrought

wrought stupendous miracles, and by their preaching had converted so many thousands to the faith,) even these Apostles of our Lord themselves, were all this long time labouring under great error, were quite ignorant and mistaken as to one weighty and most important doctrine of christianity, viz. the admission of devout Gentiles into the christian church, without circumcision and subjection to the ceremonial law;* and that not till near 12 years after this descent of the Holy Spirit upon them, was it generally known, and preached openly amongst them, that idolatrous Gentiles, upon their faith and repentance, were thus to be received.†

“A very remarkable event this in the history of the church, designed partly, perhaps, to teach us—that the wisest and most knowing of us know but in part, and prophecy but in part—that men may stand high in the church and in the favour of God, and may be both useful and faithful members and ministers of Christ; even tho’ they are quite ignorant, or greatly mistaken as to some weighty and important points of the gospel scheme of salvation.”

These

* ACTS X.

† ACTS XV.

These observations are strikingly just, and should lead us to be modest and humble in our enquiries, mild and moderate in our defence of what we believe to be the truth, and candid, gentle, and courteous towards those, who, in our estimation, have been less successful than ourselves in their pursuit of the same important object.

Thus have I attempted to give my Readers the outline of a great and good character, which, to finish with all the graceful proportions and beautiful features of the original, would require a much abler hand. Happy shall I esteem myself if those who knew the original, recognize a resemblance, however imperfect, between it and this unfinished Sketch. I lament the want of materials, for executing with greater accuracy an undertaking to which I was encouraged by the solicitation of my friends. Having been at considerable pains in informing myself of events, some of which took place almost a century ago, it is hoped the candid Reader will easily overlook such defects as he may observe, because I can sincerely say, it would have been no small pleasure to me to have been able to supply them

them; and that he will readily forgive any mistakes that I may have committed, because I would gladly have avoided them had it been in my power. If, in representing the character of Mr. Towgood, it should be thought by any into whose hands this Sketch may fall, that I have unnecessarily enlarged on the temper and duty of Ministers in general, I can truly declare, I have said nothing on these subjects, but what appeared to me naturally arising from the occasion. They are subjects of the greatest importance, which I find very necessary to inculcate frequently on my own mind, and I shall greatly rejoice, should I be found the only one who needs to be reminded of them.

I have long had occasion to rejoice in the truly fatherly kindness of Mr. Towgood. The close connection which for many years subsisted between us, as pastors of the same church, and the unre-served intimacy with which he honoured me, afforded me many opportunities of observing the workings of his mind; "While I have been musing the fire burned," and I could not refrain from giving vent to my affection for the deceased, whose
memory

memory will ever be dear to me, and to all, who like me, have derived instruction and delight from the spirit of his writings, and the charms of his conversation.

A P P E N D I X.

THE following Address was drawn up, some years since, by Mr. TOWGOOD, and was evidently intended for publication in some form or other, but it is supposed Mr. TOWGOOD judged it too short to publish by itself, and therefore withheld it, till some opportunity should occur of joining it with some other papers he might afterwards revise for the press.

CATHOLIC

CATHOLIC CHRISTIANITY ;

OR, THE

COMMUNION OF SAINTS,

EARNESTLY RECOMMENDED

TO ALL PROFESSING CHRISTIANS,

PARTICULARLY

TO THE BRETHREN OF THE

ANTIPÆDOBAPTIST PERSUASION.

Brethren;

As in all the works of God, Unity is the foundation both of beauty and strength, so it is especially in that glorious, divine structure, the Living Temple, or Church of Christ.

This Unity consists chiefly, indeed, in something internal and spiritual; in faith and love, in worshipping one and the same God, through the same one Mediator, and by the assistance of the same Spirit; in acknowledging one common rule of faith, and in feeling our hearts joined in bands of mutual love, and kind affection to one another.

But for the strengthening and carrying on this spiritual Communion, and as an emblem or token of it, the great Lord of the Church hath appointed a sacred Rite, viz. that all his Disciples should eat bread broken, and drink wine poured out, at one common Table, in remembrance of himself, our common Saviour and Lord; and to testify and to improve our unfeigned love to one another.

By

By their joint participation at this sacramental Table, all the members of Christ, (however differing in rank, in office, in riches, in sentiments and opinions, all who are real members, righteous and good men) are to signify and declare themselves to be joined in one common Body, and to be members one of another. "The cup of blessing which we bless; is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? and the bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?"* i. e. Is it not appointed to be eaten and drunk by all sincere christians, as a token that they all belong to the one Body or Church of Christ, and that they have all drunk into one Spirit; "for we, being many, are one Bread and one Body, (or because there is one Bread, we who are many, are one Body,†) for we are all partakers of that one Bread". i. e. By our joint participation of that *one* sacramental Bread, we signify and declare, according to the appointment of Christ, our common Lord, that communion of spirit, that brotherly affection which his religion enjoins.

Now

* 1 COR. X. 16. 17.

† ΟΤΙ ΕΙΣ ΑΡΤΟΣ, ΕΝ ΣΩΜΑ, ΟΙ ΠΟΛΛΟΙ ΕΣΜΕΝ.

Now, inasmuch, Brethren, as you have withdrawn yourselves from our churches, and refuse to admit us to communion in yours; you will permit us in the spirit of meekness, to expostulate with you on this seeming irregularity of your conduct, and the unhappy rent you hereby make in the one body, and church of Christ.

And does it not deserve your serious consideration

I. That such separations, in the present state of human nature, are almost necessarily attended with variance, emulations, and some degree at least, of animosities and strifes? For when one party of christians thus *causelessly* separate, and set up different Assemblies, and refuse to admit those from whom they recede to communion in their churches, is not the christian unity thereby manifestly broken? and do not estrangement and disaffection of mind too naturally ensue?

Should any man say—Nay, but brotherly love may still as well be maintained with those from whom we withdraw, though we receive them not

to a joint participation in this holy supper. This would evidently be to impeach the wisdom of our Lord, who for this very end instituted this sacred rite, and seem plainly to contradict, and counteract this design of his institution.

Will you please to consider

II. That by thus refusing communion with us, you really and in effect, disown us to be your christian Brethren, and deny us to be a part of the visible church of Christ. You virtually declare us to be excommunicate, shut out, and to be no real members of the body of Christ. Of this, it is presumed, you are not generally aware: but be pleased to consider—Is not this a common table, which Christ our common Lord, hath set up in his church, or house, at which all his brethren and servants are invited and commanded jointly to eat? Is not this bread and wine *that* by which the common head has appointed all his several members to be nourished and refreshed? If so, by denying us to have a right to this table and bread, you deny us to be Brethren, children of his family, servants

servants of Christ and members of his church.— You declare us not to belong to the visible “household of faith,” by thus shutting its door against us, and not giving us leave to partake with you therein.

This certainly cannot be right, Brethren, for as much as the table is not *yours*, but the table of our common Lord; a table spread in his church on purpose to promote communion and fellowship amongst all his faithful servants; to unite discordant christians; and to strengthen brotherly affection by their joint-eating thereat. It cannot, therefore, be pleasing to him to see you breaking this communion, and thus making a separation betwixt his members, whom he came down from heaven on purpose to gather together in one.*

Farther, III. Must it not appear extremely strange, and perfectly inconsistent with the true spirit of christianity, that you will hold communion with us, in the much more solemn acts of prayer and adoration to the Almighty Sovereign
of

* JOHN XI. 52. EPHES. I. 10.

of the world; in acts of thanksgiving and praise; but will not in the act of eating the sacramental bread?

Which of the two is the most religious and sacred act; the offering up our joint addresses to the God and Father of all through the mediation and death of Christ Jesus his Son—or the joint eating at the Lord's Table, which is but a memorial of that death? In all the most sublime and heavenly parts of worship, prayer, praise, singing, you readily join with us: but will not in this, which is only an accidental and positive part of worship, and but of temporary duration; for when our Lord shall come again, it will cease to be any act of divine worship at all. Besides,

IV. For one christian to concern himself so far about his brother's baptism as to renounce communion with him, because not baptized at the age, nor in the manner, which he thinks to be right, seems to be stretching himself greatly beyond his proper line, and, in a very culpable degree, taking too much upon himself. For if, after sin-

cere examination, I am fully satisfied myself, that my Infant Baptism was regular; no christian Brother surely has any authority or concern to trouble either himself, or me, about that matter: much less, to shut me out of the church, or to refuse communion with me, if I will not disown it, and submit to be baptized according to his manner.*

The time, or the mode, in which I was baptized does not at all concern the Society or Church; it is merely a personal thing; the social worship is not altered, nor the great ends of communion at all frustrated thereby. For what are the great ends? Are they not to remember Christ; to shew forth his death, and to testify and strengthen our love to one another? But whether we are baptized in infancy or adult years; by sprinkling, or by immersion; makes no alteration in our capacity for these. Seeing, then, I can alike devoutly remember Christ at his Table, and shew forth his death, at what time, or in what mode

* Mr. TOMBS, as learned and able a defender of Antipædobaptism as perhaps ever appeared, not only disowned, but expressed his abhorrence of this separation; and continued to his death in perfect communion with those baptized Infants.

foever baptized, and am fully satisfied therein ; is it not, Brethren, a too officious meddling, an assuming an undue authority, for any to trouble themselves about it ; and to judge, and despise, and reject me on this account. By what right do you thus “ judge another man’s servant ? ” to his own master alone he is responsible in this matter ; and by his sentence alone he is to stand, or fall.

You will say, nay ; we love and esteem you as brethren and fellow-christians ; and doubt not but hereafter to meet you in heaven.

But, with humility, let me reply—you verily do judge us, brethren, and that with as severe a judgment (penal sufferings excepted) as any mortal can do, in things of a religious kind. You pass no judgment, indeed, upon us which shall effect our future state ; for that no man can do ; but you pass a severe sentence on our religious state, as to the present world ; you declare us in effect, not to belong to the visible church of Christ ; nor to have right to the peculiar honours and privileges of that church : and as to the matter of Christian

Communion, we seem to you as heathen men and publicans. You admit us to join with you in acts of prayer and praise, and hearing the word preached; and so you will a sober Pagan, a Mahometan, or a Jew; you reject them from the Lord's Table, as not being the Lord's Servants; and so you do us. And if you believe us, as you say, capable and worthy members of the glorious, triumphant, and perfected Church in Heaven; the more extremely strange we think it, to be deemed unworthy your christian-fellowship in such feeble, imperfect churches, as are the best in the present state.

Will you please to consider, farther—

V. If our practice be an error; yet seeing it is an involuntary and an invincible error, may we not be assured that Christ, our righteous judge, will never condemn, nor cast us out of his favour for it; therefore neither should his church. If after an impartial search, we cannot see it to be an error, it is, in a culpable sense, no longer such to us. We ought, we are in duty bound, to follow

low our best judgments; nor will our Lord in the least disapprove the continuing our present practice in such circumstances as these.

If ours be not true Christian Baptism, yet do you not think, that God will accept what, in the sincerity of our hearts, we perform in the name of Christian Baptism, as if it really were such? And if God will graciously accept it, as if it were true Baptism, why shall we not find the same favour from our brethren? May it not be said in this case,* “that where there is first a willing mind, God will “accept according to what a man hath, and not “according to what he hath not”? And if God will accept, let not man reject; fallible and weak man, who stands in infinite need of such abundant condescension and forgiveness himself!

Here then we plead with you, brethren, the decision of our Lord in a case of like nature, presuming, that had you known the full meaning of that scripture, “I will have mercy and not sacrifice,” you would not have condemned the guiltless.

* 1 COR. VIII. 12.

less. It was equally unlawful for any but the Priests, to eat the Shew-Bread; and to gather and rub corn on the sabbath day, as for a person not baptized to eat the Lord's Supper. Yet David and the Apostles, who did these otherwise unlawful things in a case of necessity, are by our Lord pronounced blameless. But is not our practice, as to us, also a case of necessity? Since, after impartial enquiry, we cannot but judge it to be right; is there not a moral necessity upon us to act according to this light.

You believe us to be erroneous and weak brethren,—however, as such receive us, according to the Divine command, but “not to doubtful disputations,”* but to the Communion of Saints. If we be indeed, your brethren, we have indisputable right to the provisions of our Father's House, and to the Table of our common Lord. You have faith, a full persuasion that your opinion and practice is right, “have it to yourselves, before God.” Be content that you have full liberty to act according to your own sentiments; but give
your

* ROM. XIV. 1, 2. 3.

your brethren the same. But this liberty you do not give them, whilst for taking it, you withdraw from their communion, and reject them from yours; and refuse them that sacred token of your christian fellowship and love.

Every sincere Christian, you will please to consider, "hath, by one spirit, been baptized into one body,"* or church of Jesus Christ, whenever, or however he has received Baptism; yet, if being a sincere christian, he hath, by that spirit, of which the baptismal water is but the appointed emblem or sign, been baptised into the one body or church of Jesus Christ, he is a living member of that body, and has right to christian fellowship in all the offices of that church.

VI. The difference betwixt us, minute as it is, seems evidently to arise from not duly attending to the nature of christian Baptism; nor considering rightly what it is. Baptism, as an act of christian worship and religion, is by no means to be considered as consisting merely or chiefly in applying

* 1 COR. XII. 13.

plying water to the body, with any form of words; but in some act of faith and devotion, on our part; and in some promise or gift, on God's part.

The mere act of applying water is the least part of this sacred rite. It is in the solemn profession and dedication, by us; and in the pouring down his Holy Spirit, by Christ, (of both which the applied water is but a token or sign) that all its real value and importance consists.* To this case the Apostle's words may, with the greatest justness, be applied, "he is not a baptized Christian" who is one outwardly, neither is that Baptism which is outward in the flesh: but he is a baptised Christian who is one inwardly:" and "the Baptism," which is of any value in the Gospel dispensation: "is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter."† To the same purpose, in the 26th verse; "if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted to him for circumcision?"

* If the person be adult, his own personal act: if it be an infant, the solemn dedication and act of the parents.

† Rom. II. 29, 29.

tion?" which is, as if it had been said—if I am not regularly baptized, through some misjudgment as to that rite, yet if I keep the christian law; if I live soberly, righteously and godly in the world; shall not this holiness of my conversation be accounted to me, and accepted, as answering every end of my being baptized?

So St. Peter also expressly says,* "That the Baptism that saves," or that is of any efficacy or account in the Christian dispensation, "is not the putting away the filth of the flesh," is not the external washing, or the application of water in any mode or with any words, "but the answer of a good conscience," or those good professions and dispositions which ought evermore to accompany that act.

This then being the case, I now with pleasure add,

VII. That we are much more agreed as to the matter of christian Baptism, than you seem to ap-

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prehend.

* 1 PET. III. 23.

prehend. For you, Brethren, as to your infants, commend them, no doubt, with great seriousness of spirit, with faith and joyful hope, to the protection and care and blessing of heaven. When you give up yourselves, on any solemn occasion, to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, you give up your children also; with full purpose of heart, to educate them in the fear of God, and to teach them the great doctrines and duties of religion. Now this, we apprehend, to be the principal and essential part of what we call infant baptism. You do exactly the same with us, except the circumstance of applying water, which is, comparatively of no value in the baptism of Christ.*

On the other hand, when our children become adult, we oblige them in effect to make a solemn profession of their faith in Jesus Christ, and a resolution to live obedient to his laws, when we admit them to communion in the Lord's Supper.—

Seeing

* "We are willing to bring our children to Christ, to resign them up to him, and to dedicate them to his service." DELAUNE.

"It is, indeed, a very pious and commendable thing for parents to dedicate and devote their children to God and his service."

MR. CARY.

Seeing then, this solemn profession, and personal dedication, are according to you, the chief, the essential parts of the Baptism of Christ, and the circumstance of applying water is comparatively of little moment, it follows, that as to adult baptism, it is in truth and in reality found also among us, and that we are herein agreed with you.

The true Christian Baptism, which is not the "external washing," but the "answer of a good conscience" you acknowledge us to have; why then do you withdraw, and refuse to eat with us at our Lord's Table as if unbaptised?

But here, perhaps, it will be urged—does not the plan of reasoning by which you are enforcing this catholicism upon us, alike conclude against a separation from the National or Established Church; and condemn those who dissent from it as guilty of Schism; and as violating its unity, and order, and peace? By no means—for our brethren of the Establishment have set up to themselves another King, another Lawgiver, another Supreme Head, in things of conscience and religion, besides

Jesus Christ. They claim to themselves a power to decree other rites and other ceremonies in the worship and church of God, than Christ or his Apostles have ever decreed; and to be possessed of authority in matters of faith.* This claim we apprehend to be the very root, and the very essence of popery; the very basis on which the whole frame of the papal hierarchy stands. Admit but this claim, and you open a wide door for all the superstitions and corruptions of the Church of Rome to flow in like a deluge on you. But this power, this dangerous power and authority the Church of England avows, and openly claims. In consequence of this claim, it has decreed and enjoined other terms of communion than those which Jesus Christ and his Apostles ordained; and it hath not only taught, but obliges all its Ministers, solemnly to subscribe other doctrines of religion, and other articles of faith, than either Christ or his Apostles ever taught or enjoined. By the allegiance, therefore, which we owe to Christ, the only Lord of the Church; and by a regard to that liberty with which he has made us free, and in which we are
exhorted

* XX Article of the Church of England.

exhorted and commanded to stand fast, we think ourselves not only authorised, but required and obliged, to enter our protest against these dangerous claims; and to withdraw from that church where such unscriptural terms of communion are imposed.*

But is there any thing like this, Brethren, in the case of your unhappy separation from us? Is your liberty in the least invaded; are any terms of communion made necessary by us, which are not made necessary by the authority of Christ? No, we lay our communion open to every sincere christian, of what party, or sect soever. We acknowledge him to have equal right to this sacred supper with ourselves. We know it is not our Table, but the Table of our common Lord. Whomsoever therefore he receives, we dare not reject.

“There must be somewhere” (says Archbishop POTTER) “a very great fault, when any one of the meanest believers is excluded from Communion, who desires to embrace it on the terms which God hath prescribed. And as the Christian Religion has been completely published to the world by our blessed Lord and his Apostles, no addition can be made to it without a new Revelation. Here then is no room for invention.”

Dr. J. POTTER's Theolog. Works.

reject. However widely they differ from us in disputable, unessential points, yet as they join with us in acknowledging the same Father Almighty, the same Lord and Mediator, the same Scriptures as the only rule of faith and of practice, and demonstrate themselves animated by the Holy Spirit, by bringing forth its fruits, we think them entitled to this token of christian fellowship; we receive them, as we are commanded, "not to doubtful disputations:" remembering that ourselves are fallible, and in things which at present seem to us exceeding clear, we, possibly, may greatly err.

And what is this; but the true beauty and order, and glory of the christian church, in its present imperfect state! The foundation of all beauty, an ingenious Author has observed, is "uniformity amidst variety."* That the great founder of the christian church hath, in this respect, formed it with admirable beauty, an attentive observer will evidently see. For amidst the infinite variety of gifts and endowments, of ranks and offices, of sentiments and opinions which his wisdom

* HUTCHESON'S Enquiry, &c.

wisdom permits, or his counsel ordains, a delightful union or uniformity is expressly established. All the differently minded christians are to be united in perfect charity: and notwithstanding their diversity of sentiments and speculations, they are all to sit at one Table, and to eat as of the same bread, and to drink as of the same sacramental cup, in token of their being fellow-members of the same household of faith, and of their unfeigned love to one another. As far, therefore, as we destroy this unity, or communion, by causeless separations, or hinder it from taking place, so far we hurt the beauty and the glory of the church, which is called the spouse of Jesus Christ.

Should not this consideration engage the various sects and parties amongst christians to heal the unhappy breach their separations have made, and to receive one another to the common Table of their Lord? Shall the one body, the visible church of Christ be thus divided and rent? One party of christians setting up a Table in opposition to others; fencing it round with the peculiarities of their sect, and suffering none to eat with them
but

but those who comply with the same gestures, and modes, and forms of thinking, or at least forms of speaking, with themselves? Is this, that unity of spirit, that communion of Saints, that mutual forbearance and fellowship with one another, which christianity enjoins? No, but the glorious symmetry of that living temple, the body and church of Christ, is hereby grievously hurt: envyings, mutual jealousies, animosities, and party zeal too naturally creep in, and sour and contract the mind. Infidels insult; christianity is wounded in the house of its friends; and charity, its life, runs out at the wounds.

Thus, the religion of our Lord, that blessed Herald and Prince of Peace; which was mercifully designed, and is admirably formed, to unite men's discordant minds; becomes the unhappy means of setting them at a greater variance, and of rendering them more estranged and unfriendly to one another.—Ought these things to be so, Christians? We all know they ought not. Let us each do what in him lies to heal the fatal breaches, which have been so long the disgrace, and, had
not

not Almighty Providence mercifully interposed, must long ere this hour have been the destruction of the christian church. "For meat destroy not the work of God." Let the "worthy name of Christ be no more blasphemed," nor his religion despised, through the excess of our zeal about ritual, circumstantial and speculative matters.—As the wisdom of God hath left them, perhaps, purposely surrounded with some degree of darkness, for the proof of our humility, moderation, and condescension to one another; let us improve it to this happy end; by which we shall at once both reflect honour on our religion, and lay up for ourselves distinguished glory in Heaven.*

There must be heresies, i. e. sects and divisions, "that they who are approved may be made manifest," i. e. that men of real and substantial goodness; men truly possessed of the wisdom from above; may have opportunity of shewing it, by the meekness, condescension, and charity of their deportment towards those who differ from them. Laying aside all pride, and undue conceit of ourselves,

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selves,

* ROM. XIV. 17, 18.

selves, let us remember—that we are all fallible—that the wisest and most knowing of us, “know but in part, and prophecy but in part.”—“That if any man thinketh he knoweth any thing,” i. e. if he prides himself in his superior knowledge, is ostentatious and vain of it, is conceited, dogmatical, abounding in his own sense, and censures and despises others who think differently from himself, that man, we may be assured, is an ignorant and empty boaster; and if he be a christian at all, he is one of the meanest class, “and knoweth not any thing yet as he ought to know.” Let us remember that others may have searched with as much diligence and impartiality, and may, perhaps, be favoured with greater light and grace of God, than ourselves. That whoever, in a righteous and well ordered life, shews the fruits of the spirit, goodness, righteousness and truth, that person is, undoubtedly, a truly baptized christian, as to all the purposes of christian fellowship—That in Christ Jesus, or under the gospel dispensation: neither the having, nor the wanting water-baptism, much less either the time or the mode of receiving it, is of any the least consideration in comparison

parison with that mutual condescension, forbearance and love, which enter into the essence and are the life of the new creature.—That 'tis quite contrary to the genius and spirit of christianity to lay so great a stress upon ritual observances; the kingdom of God, or the state of religion under the administration of the Messiah, “consisting not in meat and drink, but in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.” And “he that in these things serveth Christ, is accepted of God,” (and therefore with great cordiality ought to be received also) and approved of men.

If there be then, Brethren, any communion betwixt the glorious, triumphant, united church in heaven, and this militant, divided, distracted one on earth.—If they have any knowledge of our state, or concern themselves in our happiness, and wish the progress and advancement of Christ's kingdom in the world,—as without question they do: What pleasure must it give these benevolent spirits, to see the several contending sects and parties of christians laying aside their animosities, and embracing, like themselves, in arms of mutual de-

B b 2

light!

light! It will cause joy amongst the Angels in the presence of God, if, abolishing those divisions which have been so long, and so deep a disgrace to Christianity, and hurt to ourselves, we return to that generous, catholic, benevolent disposition, which is the true glory of our nature, the true happiness of the human soul, and the brightest image of God, the common Father of us all: and if, as the appointed token of this benevolent disposition, we eat as brethren, at the common Table of our Lord, and rejoice together in love.

The heavenly host, at such a sight, will again strike their golden harps, and sing "Glory to God in the highest; on earth peace; and good-will amongst men." Let us hear them as if addressing us in the words of one of their bright companions, "If there be any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the spirit," which you ought religiously to cherish; "if any bowels and mercies," which you are obliged to put on, "fulfil ye our joy; by being like-minded," unanimous, "having the same love, of one accord, and of one mind." "Let nothing be done through
strife

strife or vain-glory, but, in lowliness of mind, let each esteem other better than themselves.”* “And we beseech you to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called: with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring” (συνδουλόμενοι) earnestly striving “to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.”† Remember what solemn charges our Lord gave, and what earnest prayers he offered up, that all who called themselves his disciples should love one another: “that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee; that they also may be all one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me, and that they may be one, even as we are one.”‡

“There is one body, and one spirit,” which animates and fills this one body, the church, “even as ye are called in one hope of your calling: one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism” of the Spirit, by which every sincere christian hath been vitally united, and received into the one body, the church
of

* PHILIP. II. 1, 2, 3.

† EPHES. IV. 1, 2, 3.

‡ JOHN XVII. 21, 22.

of Jesus Christ, "one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." I beg leave again to observe, that as a symbol of this unity, and as a means of promoting it, you are commanded, by your common Lord, to eat as at one Table, and to drink as of one cup, as a standing token or sign of your being all children of one family, and animated by one spirit. Receive one another then to this sacred institution: and remember, that for one party of christians to set up a Table in the church, or house of God, in opposition to, and in distinction from others, and to exclude any from it whom they have reason to believe are the Lord's accepted servants, is criminally to break the unity of the church; it is to wound and tear in pieces the one body of Jesus Christ. The Table they thus erect is not the Lord's Table, but a Table of their own: and as far as they thus eat in criminal separation from, and uncharitable seclusion of other acknowledged christians, they eat not the Lord's Supper.

Now, therefore, Brethren, though there happens to be a trifling and insignificant difference
betwixt

betwixt us, as to the circumstance of water-baptism, let not Satan get advantage of it, to separate and divide, and thereby weaken and disgrace us in the sight of an observing world. The difference, surely, is not such, but we may worship in the same Assembly, eat at the same Table of Christ our common Lord, and walk in perfect communion and fellowship with one another.

Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God even our Father, who hath loved us, and given us everlasting consolation and good hope through Grace; comfort, unite, and strengthen our hearts, and establish and make us perfect in every good work! That, holding the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace, we may grow up into a greater meetness to be translated to the happy realms where all the children of God shall be gathered together into one! Amen.

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